



First-time buyers would have saved 20 per cent

STARTER HOME SCHEME IS AXED

Report by Richard Guttridge

A £9.8 MILLION council starter home scheme, which was set to help young people in Dudley onto the housing ladder, has been scrapped.

Dudley Council has blamed the Government for the collapse of the programme, which aimed to create cheaper housing on the sites of former council buildings.

A total of 62 starter homes were going to be made available as part of a scheme to build on the sites of the former Mere Centre in Stourbridge, Ambecote House care home in Brettell Lane, Turner House in Wren's Nest and the old St Thomas' Network in Beechwood Road.

Bosses say the 'required legislation' for the scheme has not yet been passed by the Government and the homes will instead be sold at market value.

The plan had been hailed by council leader Councillor Patrick Harley when it was announced last year, who said the authority had 'seized the opportunity' to support people who want to buy their first home but are forced out of the market due to high prices. First-time buyers aged 24 to 39 would have saved 20 per cent on the value of a house under the scheme.

Affordable

Council chiefs said as the scheme had not been brought in by Parliament, and was unlikely to any time soon, the Dudley scheme could not go ahead.

Dudley Council was given £625,000 from the Homes and Communities Agency, which launched the starter homes initiative, to demolish the buildings and build the homes.

Bosses say homes will still be built, of which 25 per cent will be 'affordable' in order to comply with current planning conditions. A total of 59 homes will be sold at market value and 20 affordable properties made available for rent.

Councillor Laura Taylor, cabinet member for housing, said: "This decision refines what we had originally planned. We will build on the experience we have gained in recent years from developing quality council homes. We are confident we can deliver the homes that people want at affordable prices."

OH SHE DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE ZOOSIDE



Bucket and spade weather? Doreen Tipton unveils the new beach, Ow Bin Ya' Sands, which is at Dudley Zoo all summer

POPULAR Black Country character Doreen Tipton launched the bostin' new beach at Dudley Zoo – just in time for one of the wettest Spring Bank Holiday weekends for years.

However, there were high hopes that rising temperatures following the weekend's thunder storms and downpours would see the site

getting plenty of use in the sunshine – although the half-term forecast remains mixed.

Doreen Tipton officially opened the 50ft by 30ft beach, Ow Bin Ya Sands, which will be in place throughout the summer.

Complete with 80 tonnes of sand, piles of buckets and spades, two giant deckchairs and

plenty of picnic tables, the beach has been created near the sensory garden, just below the castle.

Seaside-style children's entertainment will also be held at the Castle Hill attraction's summer beach. They have even got special edition Ow Bin Ya Sands rock for sale.

WEATHER

Flood tragedy after region hit by deluge

THE Black Country and Birmingham were hit by freak floods that caused havoc over the Bank Holiday weekend.

The region is continuing to count the cost of the flash flooding, which saw a month's rainfall in just one hour in Edgbaston.

An elderly man died in the floods in Walsall when his van was caught in water under a bridge.

Water was waist-deep in parts of south Birmingham and one route impassable due to water five feet deep. Tipton was also hit by a deluge.

● Swamped: Picture – page 3

PLANNING

Recycling depot gets green light

A LARGE recycling depot will be built on the former Helix factory site in Lye after planning bosses gave the thumbs up to the scheme.

The facility on part of the plot formerly occupied by the stationary giant in Engine Lane is expected to create around 50 jobs.

The company will recycle 40,000 tons of aggregate material for the construction industry.

FOOTBALL

Historic Albion medal up for sale

A PIECE of West Bromwich Albion history is going under the hammer at Dudley auctioneers Aston's on Thursday, June 7.

It is the Football League Champions 1919-20 winner's gold medal that belonged to Joe Smith, who played nearly 500 games for the Baggies and Birmingham City, and won two England caps. When a similar medal that belonged to skipper Jesse Pennington came up for auction last year it fetched £24,000.

INSIDE VETERANS TO BE HONOURED



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Drive-by shooting killer jailed for life



Killer Danielle Williams

A MAN from Dudley has been jailed for life after gunning down an innocent bystander in a drive-by shooting.

Danielle Williams, aged 23, of Attingham Drive, opened fire with a sub-machine gun from a silver Volkswagen Golf outside a shop in Birmingham.

Victim Mekel Sterling found himself in the 'wrong place at the wrong time', Birmingham Crown Court heard.

Mr Sterling, known locally as Skelly, was outside the shop on Great Hampton Row when shots were fired. He is not thought to have been the target.

He was struck in the chest and stag-

gered into the store for help but the 36-year-old father could not be saved and died in hospital.

The shooting is thought to have been a revenge attack after shots were fired at a group of men from a Ford Kuga outside a fast food restaurant on Dudley Road the day before.

Driver

Williams was jailed for at least 33 years, along with driver Kayne Robinson, of Roseberry Street, Winslow Green, after both were found guilty of murder. Detective Chief Inspector Edward

Foster, from West Midlands Police's Homicide Unit, said: "Sadly Mekel found himself caught up in something not of his own making and paid the ultimate price. He will not see his children grow into adulthood."

Jacob Brown, 25 from Handsworth, was cleared. Jurors were unable to reach verdicts on murder charges facing Devonte May, 24 from Handsworth and 19-year-old Geary Barnett, from Winslow Green. They pleaded not guilty to murder but guilty to assisting an offender. They were jailed for three years and two-and-a-half years respectively.

'Ghost shift' fraud cost NHS more than £70k

A HEALTH worker involved in a plot that defrauded the National Health Service (NHS) out of nearly £73,000 has been jailed.

Rilindis Bessem, of Brettal Lane, Brierley Hill, was persuaded by Charles Elad, of Westwood Close, Milton Keynes, to join his 'ghost shifts' fraud.

Bessem was among four agency workers who submitted fraudulent timesheets to a recruitment agency, which was unaware of the fraud. The workers were paid for the unworked shift and the agency then unknowingly invoiced the various trusts for the shifts.

Elad, aged 46, was working as a recruitment officer for ID Medical at the time. Each of the five workers was convicted of separate fraud conspiracies with Elad. His wife, Tanyi Elad, was convicted of a money laundering offence after her bank account was used.

The total loss to the NHS was £72,991.11, and various NHS hospitals in England were targeted, including Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Scunthorpe General, Royal Blackburn, and Darlington.

Hide

Once an agency worker had been paid for the 'ghost shifts', Elad would then request they make a payment to him, using his wife's bank account to hide the transactions.

Bessem, 39, who had denied one count of conspiracy to commit fraud by false representation, was convicted by jury and received a six-month prison sentence. Elad received three years' imprisonment. He had denied five counts of conspiracy to commit fraud by false representation and one count of fraud. He was convicted of four counts of conspiracy to commit fraud and one count of fraud.

Tanyi Esekang Elad, 38, denied converting criminal property but was convicted by the jury. She received a four month prison sentence, suspended for two years.

They were all sentenced at Kingston-upon-Hull Crown Court on May 18. The NHS Counter Fraud Authority will now continue under the Proceeds of Crime Act to recover the money lost to the NHS.

Focus on service

A BLACK Country NHS Trust is inviting the public to find out more about their mental health services.

Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust staff at The Elms Centre Slade Road, Halesowen, will open their doors on Monday (June 4), from 10am until 4pm.

The event is open to young people, families and professionals that work with children and young people. For more information contact susan.thomas35@nhs.net

College chosen for new T-level courses

DUDLEY College of Technology will be one of the first in the UK to introduce the new T-level exam courses.

The college on The Broadway is among four schools and colleges in the Black Country to have been named as the first T-level providers.

The courses are dubbed the greatest shake-up of technical education for 70 years. The T-levels are technical qualifications at A-level standard. The course content will be created by panels of employers with a three-month compulsory industry placements.

The T-levels, which are technical qualifications at A-level standard, will be taught at Dudley College of Technology, Sandwell Academy, Walsall College and Walsall Studio School.

They are among just 10 further education providers across the Midlands chosen to take part in the scheme. Across the country, 52 schools and colleges have been named as the first T-level providers.

The first three subjects will be construction, digital, and education and childcare, which will be taught from September 2020.

Engineering

A further 22 courses being rolled out in stages from 2021, with courses covering sectors such as finance and accounting, engineering and manufacturing, and creative and design.

Neil Thomas, principal of Dudley College of Technology said: "We are excited about the impact that T-levels will have in the future."

"Colleges have an important role to play in supporting the productivity of the regions they serve by providing the technically skilled workforce needed by local employers."

"We look forward to working with partners to introduce these qualifications and further strengthen the links between education and industry."

Fizzogs pucker up for day centre visit



A cuppa and a kiss - The Fizzogs with Terry Johnson at the Brett Young Dementia Gateway

DUDLEY'S Dancing Grannies popped into a day care centre for a cuppa and a little boogie to mark national Dementia Action Week.

Internet sensations the Fizzogs performed for people with dementia and their carers, friends and families at the Dudley Council-run Brett Young Dementia Gateway

in Old Hawne Lane, Halesowen. The trio danced their way around the centre, sharing laughter with those they met. Their performance was one of a number of activities to celebrate the national campaign.

Other activities include a tea party, an Elvis Presley tribute, musical mobility and flower arranging.

Councillor Nicolas Barlow, member for adult social care, said: "People with dementia responded really well to the entertainment and many were up dancing."

Dudley Council runs dementia gateways at the Brett Young Centre and the Crystal Gateway in Brierley Hill.

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Convicted paedophile imam still on the run

A PAEDOPHILE religious leader who evaded justice by telling lies about his health and fleeing to Bangladesh during his trial is still wanted by police, more than 18 months after absconding.

Hafiz Rahman, who preyed on two young girls at a Black Country mosque in the 1980s, fled after claiming he was to ill to attend court.

Rahman, of Ballard Road, Nether-ton, was found guilty of five charges of indecent assault in October 2016.

He was sentenced to 11-and-a-half years in prison in his absence but by then had boarded a flight to Bangladesh.

He was the imam at Queens Cross mosque in Cradley Heath and was convicted of historic crimes against the girls, who he was supposed to be giving religious instruction.

Hopes of his capture were raised last year when files were passed to extradition experts but a West Midlands Police spokesman confirmed that he is still wanted almost 20 months after his escape.

A spokesman for the police force, said: "Inquiries are still on-going - he's still wanted."

One of his victims has said that she believes he may never be brought to justice. Of the court case and conviction, she said: "It was a bittersweet victory. Others now know what he was doing but I haven't got closure."

Drug crook fails to get jail term cut

A DRUG dealer from Dudley who was involved in a £1.5 million cocaine and heroin plot has failed to get his jail term cut on appeal.

Lea Gavin Brown, 32, of Tanfield Avenue, Blowers Green, was jailed for 16 years on November 10. Brown's catalogue of crime began in 2014 when found with crack cocaine and cannabis. In 2016 he was spotted parked near a school and hit a police vehicle as he sped away. Brown was last year convicted of conspiracy to supply cocaine and heroin. Lawyers argued his sentence was too tough but Judge Anuja Dhir, sitting with two other judges, dismissed the appeal saying: "The judge was obliged to impose a total sentence which reflected all of Brown's offending."

Delays warning

A STRETCH of a busy road in Halesowen will be one-way as gas works are carried out. The A458 Stourbridge Road is one-way eastbound from its junction with the New Road roundabout until tomorrow (Friday).

Bomb squad called as grenade found in garage



Bomb disposal - Picture: @snapperSK

THE bomb squad descended on a Cradley street after a Second World War grenade was found in a garage.

West Midlands Police were called to Cradley just before 2.20pm on Thursday to reports of a grenade being found in a garage during a house clearance.

A police cordon was put in place while residents were advised to stay in their houses, or to leave the area, around Furlong Lane. The lane itself was closed between Hill Bank Road and Timberdine Close.

The grenade, though to date back to

the 1940s, was found in a box, along with other ammunition, according to a resident. The bomb disposal team were on the scene for around 15 minutes.

A police spokesman said that everything was 'safe and clear' shortly after 9pm when the police cordon was lifted.

A West Midlands Police spokesman said: "The device was found to be inactive on Thursday night and the cordon was removed."

Neighbours spoke of their shock at what was found in the garage. Ian

Hunt, aged 42, who lives on the same street, said: "We came back down here earlier in the car, and we couldn't get through because of the cordon."

"His family had hired a house clearance. They were going through stuff and found a box with a grenade in it. They didn't know if the grenade was live or not. The removal men told us the grenade was rusty and still had the pin in it."

A spokesman for West Midlands Police said the explosive ordnance disposal team was called and the road was also closed as a safety precaution.

Camera vans catching hundreds of speeders

MOBILE speed cameras caught almost 1,500 motorists in Dudley borough in the last year.

Marked enforcement vans recorded speeding drivers at 14 locations. In total, 1,486 tickets were issued in 2017.

It comes five years after all static 'housed' speed cameras were turned off.

Most tickets were issued on the A4123 Birmingham New Road, between the Burnt Tree Island and Tipton Road, where 245 motorists were caught on the northbound and 25 on the southbound.

That stretch of road is in Castle and Priory ward. Councillor Ken Finch, a representative of that ward on Dudley Council, said: "I support the use of anything that could save lives on our roads. Unfortunately in my ward we are burdened with the Birmingham New Road and Priory Road. Both are used as a race track by some drivers. I hope the cameras catching people will slow them down."

On Oakham Road in Kates Hill, Dudley, 163 motorists were caught, and on the A449 Kidderminster Road in Kingswinford, 157. This was followed by 147 on St Peter's Road in Netherton, 143 on the B4043 Manor Lane in Halesowen and 137 on the A458 Halesowen Road, also in Halesowen, near Narrow Lane.

Fine

In Saltwells Road in Netherton, 133 drivers were caught, in Milking Bank, Dudley, 91, the A461 Stourbridge Road in Brierley Hill, near Terrace Street, 65, and on Spies Lane in Halesowen, between Kent Road and Ridgeway Avenue, 63.

On the A457 Tipton Road in Sedgley, between Gate Street and Park Road, 52 were caught, on the A456 Manor Way in Halesowen between Grange Road Island and Sandvik Engineering, 42 were snared and in Bourne Street in Dudley, 23.

Drivers receive a minimum fine of £100 and three penalty points if caught speeding. West Midlands Police use 160 mobile camera sites and talks are now under way over bringing in average speed cameras in the Black Country.

Man dies as region hit by floods



Rescue teams help residents stranded by the flood in Birmingham

Pic: @Snappersk

A MAN died after his van was swamped by water following flash flooding across the Black Country.

The tragedy occurred amid torrential downpours that swept across the region over the Bank Holiday weekend.

Police confirmed a motorist in his 80s had died in the early hours

of Monday in Lichfield Road, Rushall. A resident and council worker had desperately tried to rescue the man, diving into floodwater at around 2am and trying to break the van window.

However, the man was taken to hospital and pronounced dead a short time later.

Routes by Birchley Island in Oldbury saw major disruption, including on Wolverhampton Road in both directions. Floodwater swamped routes in Tipton, including Walker Street and Toll End Road and Birmingham was badly hit, including parts of Harborne and Edgbaston.

NEWS IN BRIEF

High-rise blocks safe says council

DUDLEY Council's housing chief has confirmed no high-rise blocks in the borough will need altering in the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster, which claimed 72 lives. The Government has pledged £400 million to help remove dangerous cladding.

Councillor Laura Taylor, cabinet member for housing, said: "We do not have cladding on any of our 21 high-rise blocks, and as such we have no need to apply for a council for cash from this new Government fund. We have been working with the fire service to complete fire audits on all of our blocks, and carry out regular technical checks."

Hospital project is delayed again

A 2020 opening for the £350 million Midland Met Hospital looks impossible with completion unlikely before 2022. The Smethwick 'super hospital' was originally due to open this year.

Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust boss Toby Lewis has admitted efforts to transfer a contract from failed Wolverhampton construction giant Carillion to another provider have so far failed. "The appalling behaviour of Carillion and dithering from ministers has badly damaged this project," said Warley MP John Spellar.

Phone business is to axe 92 outlets

MORE than 90 Carphone Warehouse shops are to close this year.

Dixons Carphone said that it will shut 92 of its smaller standalone Carphone Warehouse outlets over the next 12 months as it gets to grips with changing consumer habits.

Cash-strapped consumers are holding on to older devices for longer and going 'sim-only', which has dented the group's performance. However, the firm insisted that no jobs will be lost as staff will be offered the chance to move to larger branches nearby. The group has around 1,100 outlets.

Brewery's new tap room bar to open

A GROWING brewery and pub chain has announced an opening date for a new bar.

Lye-based Sadler's Ales is creating up to eight jobs with the Sadler's Tap Room in Hagley Road West, Quinton, on June 7. Former shop premises have been converted to create a bar that will offer a full range of the beers produced at the company's brewery on Conyers Trading Estate in Station Drive and serve street food.



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COUNTY NEWS

11pc of weapons crime ends in jail

CRIMINALS in the West Midlands convicted for weapons possession were more likely to be given a community order than a prison sentence of more than a year, new figures show. According to the Ministry of Justice, 91 out of the 799 of people convicted for possession of guns or knives across the region last year were handed jail time of 12 months or more.

While this represents only 11 per cent of those convicted, over the same period 235 offenders (30 per cent) were given community orders.

Just 35 criminals caught with weapons (four per cent) were jailed for four years or more.

Severn Trent to invest £100m

WATER company Severn Trent, which serves millions of customers across the Midlands, has unveiled a £100 million investment drive.

It comes as the business confirmed its turnover for the year to March 31, increased to £1.69 billion, up from £1.63bn in 2017, while pre-tax profits also rose from £520.1m to £541m.

The firm said that the £100m investment, which has been generated from savings, would go towards a number of initiatives. This includes 20,000 extra pressure monitors in its network of pipes, which means that leaks and bursts can be spotted more quickly.

Contactless paying is proving popular

A STUDY from UK Finance, the trade body representing the banking sector, found that almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of banking customers in the West Midlands regularly use their card to make contactless payments – the highest proportion in the country.

Guinness record dream for the floating catwalk

FAMOUS faces joined 30 professional models and some 120 guests to witness a Guinness world record attempt for the longest floating catwalk.

A Wolverhampton-based model agency is behind the bid, now waiting to hear if it has a place in the Guinness Book of Records.

Dream Street Models, which was based in Walsall but is now at Hilton Hall in Essington, had waited 28 weeks to get approval from Guinness for the attempt.

The journey began in Stourport and saw the catwalk on a boat floating down the River Severn – considered to be the UK's longest river at 220 miles.

A two-hour fashion show attracted such faces as X Factor stars Stevi Ritchie and Chloe Jasmine as well as a performance from 90s Icelandic pop singer Alda Bjork Olafsdottir who has sold five million records worldwide.

Platform

The event showcased designs from all over the UK – high street to couture fashion.

The backstage team included the Bryanna Angel make-up artist as seen in Vogue and Julian Fiddimore's Revail who manage the elite beauty queens in the UK, along with top hair-stylist Hair by Harps.

Dream Street Models founder Chloe Avon said: "I am happy to be able to provide a platform for designers to be seen whilst giving models the opportunity to walk in a large production."

She expects to find out within the next fortnight whether they achieved a world record. Dream Street is getting a reputation for unusual fashion venues. Last September it held a fashion show at Blithbury Reindeer Lodge in Rugeley. The next show will take place on a moving train at Chasewater Railway in Burntwood on July 1.



Hold tight – Icelandic singer Alda entertains
Picture by Cloud11 Photography



X Factor star Chloe Jasmine.
Picture David Sutton Photography



Evening look – crowds look on as another
model takes to the floating catwalk



All aboard – the catwalk record attempt
attracted hundreds of people

Collapse of Carillion – concern on suppliers

THE collapse of Carillion has raised 'significant concerns' about the Government's relationship with major suppliers, and the potential impact on the delivery of important public services, an MPs' report says.

The Public Accounts Committee published Government risk assessments of its suppliers, taking into account stock market performance and financial statements.

Wolverhampton-based Carillion had been given a risk rating of amber for months owing to its performance on contracts with the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Justice, but it was not until after the company issued a profit warning last July that the Government downgraded it to red.

"It appears the Government was not aware of Carillion's financial distress until this point," said the report.

Secrecy

"In November 2017, officials recommended a provisional black rating for Carillion. However, following representations from the company, the Cabinet Office did not confirm the designation. Carillion collapsed less than two months later."

Meg Hillier, who chairs the committee, said secrecy surrounded large Government contracts to deliver public projects and services.

"The strategic supplier risk assessments provide an insight into the relationship between Government and suppliers and give rise to many questions we want to pursue."

The committee is to hold an inquiry into concerns raised by the papers relating to suppliers with a risk rating of amber, red or black. Thousands of jobs have been lost since Carillion went into liquidation in January.

ADVERTISEMENT

'One-stop' dental services have Lynn

Singing for joy

LYNN Jones lives life Lat a hundred miles an hour, her days punctuated with gardening in her village home, classes for Pilates and keep-fit, reaching for the high notes in her local Sing for Fun choir and planning her next holiday.

"I can't sing, but its an hour-and-a-half of pure joy," she declares.

Admitting to being only the slightest bit older than her 70th milestone, she is the perfect example of all that's great about British country life retirement.

Intelligent, full of energy

and laughing easily, she admits to being driven to do things – lots of things.

"Life is for living and Keith [husband] and myself embrace retirement. I'm always on the go, I've always got something on and I need things with me to be right," she says.

Her conversation is light and shares with an eager enthusiasm plans for a month's adventure in Canada.

"We want to do the whole thing... Vancouver, Banff, the glacial lakes, the Rockies," she adds.

Unaware

But as she relaxes in the rest room at North Street Dental and Implant Clinic, her upbeat demeanour momentarily changes.

"I'm very difficult to live with when my teeth are not right.

Just as the rest of my health needs to be right, so do my teeth. Isn't that right, Keith!" she declares.

Lynn was unaware of problems with her teeth until a regular check-up revealed an upper prosthetic, secured on four mini implants, was not seating correctly. She was originally

referred to the dentist who had undertaken the implant work.

"Unfortunately he had retired," adds the former media employee and member of a public partnership that contributed to the BBC's purposes remit.

"It was my neighbour who recommended I should see Steven Burchell after his wife had received implants at the clinic," she recalls.

Unexpectedly, Lynn found further approval while waiting for a delayed homebound flight at the Palma Airport, Majorca.

"Sitting next to us was a lady just making conversation. I asked how far she had to travel after the plane landed and said she lived in Dudley. I mentioned that I was due to see a dentist there.

"Right away she asked 'would that be Steven Burchell?'"

"That's where I go," she added.

Principal Steven DipCDT RCS(Eng) GDC 108353, adds: "We will not carry out any non-essential surgical procedure and there was no need to replace the mini implants.

"The service I have received has been excellent and worth every penny."

Praising the

"complete appointment" experience, Lynn explains: "I was able to see Owain [clinical lead dentist], have time with Sophie the hygienist, see Steven Burchell and Steve [Morris, advanced dental technician] to get the prosthetics professionally cleaned. It's an invaluable service and for someone like me, who could be travelling for more than an hour to get here

"The service I have received has been excellent and worth every penny," she says.

"The complete appointment system is invaluable."
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Practice principal Steven Burchell
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Rental bikes will roll out across region this summer

THE first fleet of rental bikes will appear in the West Midlands over the summer, it has been revealed.

Nextbike is to roll out 5,000 bikes along with connecting parking hubs over the next two years. The first 100 will be introduced at University of Birmingham in the coming months. This will be followed by 900 in Wolverhampton from September.

Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall will each get 300 this autumn.

It has not yet been decided where the docking stations will go but cities and towns get one station to around every 16 bikes.

Nextbike was picked to run the bike concession by Transport for West Midlands. The move will create 50 jobs in the West Midlands.

Julian Scriven, director of Nextbike, said: "Nextbike will not only help deliver a cost-effective and environmentally-conscious way of getting around, it will bring a lot of additional benefits, such as less traffic and improved health."

It will cost 50p to use a bike for 30 minutes. Subscription packages will be available for £30-a-year with the first 30 minutes of every journey free, then 25p for each 30 minutes after.

The bikes will have eight gears. They will be similar to London's so-called Boris Bikes, named after former mayor Boris Johnson, who introduced them.

Wedding venue

HAGLEY Hall, near Stourbridge, hosts a free admission wedding open morning on Saturday from 9am to noon, when couples can view the venue and talk to the hall's wedding advisor. Book first on 01562 887290.

Veterans to be honoured on Armed Forces Day

WAR heroes are being invited to attend a medal presentation as part of Armed Forces Day.

Veterans in Dudley borough are encouraged to attend an event celebrating the work of servicemen and women, past and present at Himley Hall and Park, on Sunday, July 1.

The day will include a presentation of medals and badges, including the HM Armed Forces Veterans Badge by the Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Alan Taylor. The free event is being run by Dudley Council from 11am to 5pm.

Amanda Tomlinson, chief executive at Black Country Housing Group, which is sponsoring this year's event, said: "We are calling on servicemen and women who are entitled to, or have already been sent their HM Armed Forces Badges, to come forward and have them officially presented at Armed Forces Day."

Councillor Taylor, added: "The council's Armed Forces Day celebrations are growing every year, attracting thousands of visitors to Himley Hall. It's free entry and includes entertainment for all generations of the family to enjoy with the formal proceedings and badge presentation being a highlight of the day."

Vehicles

Other highlights include music performances by the RAF Cosford Voluntary Band and a display of historic military vehicles.

Anyone who believes they are entitled to one of the HM Armed Forces Veterans Badges should email dbs-modmo-vetsbadge@mod.uk to apply, or for medal queries DBS-Medals@mod.uk, or call the Veterans UK helpline on 0808 1914218.

Veterans need to have received their badge before contacting Dudley Council to have them presented on the day. Veterans who served on Arctic convoys and in Bomber Command can also apply for their badge by calling the helpline. Anyone who has already received one of the badges but not had it formally presented can contact the council on (01384) 818186 to be part of the ceremony.



Veterans urged to apply for Armed Forces Veterans Badge, shown by Staff Sergeant Richard Godfrey

Liberty to shut site but give jobs pledge

NEARLY 50 workers at a factory in the Black Country have been told it will close at some point over the next five months.

Liberty Group says it has decided to pull out of the markets served by its Drawn Tubes and Fairbright Wire businesses in Phoenix Street, West Bromwich.

But the company says it will aim to find new roles for the 49 workers at either its own sites in the West Midlands or with other engineering companies nearby that it has close links with.

Liberty has around 17 sites in the West Midlands and employs around 1,000 people across the

Black Country after it bought up a string of factories following the collapse of Caparo Industries in 2015.

Both Phoenix Street businesses face a long-term decline in their markets and competition from bigger and cheaper rivals on the Continent.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Event raised funds to help macaques

DUDLEY Zoo is sending more than £250 to a project helping to protect macaques in Indonesia, thanks to the generosity of visitors.

A total of £257.40 was raised during International Macaque Week when primate keepers held an awareness event throughout the last Bank Holiday weekend.

A stand was set up in the Castle Courtyard and keepers were on hand to spread the word about Selamatkan Yaki – a project working with critically endangered Sulawesi crested black macaques in Indonesia.

All roads lead to annual Auto Fest

HUNDREDS of car enthusiasts are expected to attend the annual Auto Fest in Bromsgrove on Sunday.

The event on June 3 at Stoke Prior Country Club will showcase classic, modern, sports and performance cars. It will also include a family entertainment zone with bouncy castle and stalls.

The festival will raise money for Onside, a charity which supports people with mental health, dementia and learning disabilities. The show is open from 10am to 5pm. Entry is £5 per car, £2 per bike.

Neighbours celebrate with £1,000 prize each

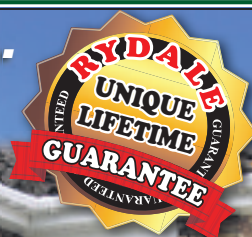
SIX lucky neighbours in Hagley are celebrating after their postcode was drawn as a winner of the People's Postcode Lottery's Daily Prize.

Church Street residents who are subscribers to the lottery have each picked up a cheque of £1,000 thanks to their DY9 0NA postcode.

A minimum of 32 per cent of the People's Postcode Lottery ticket sales goes to charities, including local causes.

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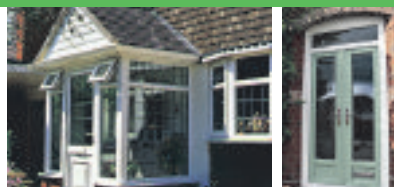
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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



Storing up trouble as millions shop online

IT'S always a bit of a downer when you return from your holiday. And even more so when you switch on the television hoping to relax with a pint of mild and a bit of Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away, only to be greeted instead by Fiona Phillips wittering on about the 'fall of a national institution'.

Asking the so-so former breakfast TV presenter to analyse the decline of Marks & Spencer is like getting Gazza to front a documentary on Greek literature. Strange choice.

But while it was not the viewing I had planned, there is also no denying Channel 5 had its timing spot-on with this one, coinciding perfectly with the news that M&S would be closing 100 stores, with the one in Walsall among the first.

Now, unlike Fiona, I don't hold any great place in my heart for M&S. Maybe it's the memories of never-ending boredom in childhood, when this seemed by far the duller place in the world. Or maybe it was the way it so quickly turned its back on the high streets of Dudley and West Bromwich when it calculated there was more profit in having a single branch at Merry Hill.

This is not a national institution, it's just another store chain. And one which showed so little loyalty to its Black Country customers in the 1980s can hardly demand an outpouring of goodwill now it is facing hard times.

But while I won't mourn the brand, I do feel huge sadness for the people losing their jobs through no fault of their own, and also the huge hole this is going to leave in our already-struggling town centres. Already there is speculation about the future viability of the Saddlers Centre, where the Walsall branch is based, and I fear we will see more of the same when the full extent of the closure programme becomes clear.

It seems the one thing everyone agrees on is that it is growth of online shopping which is killing our towns. So why do we do it? Well frankly, I don't. I've never seen the appeal in paying up-front for items I haven't seen, and then being told they can't be delivered because I am at work. Yet strangely, millions of people can't get enough of it, probably the same people who will take to their keyboards bemoaning the decline of their town.

It's time to wake up. If you care about where you live, support your town centre, even if it means paying a few pounds more. Otherwise, a few years from now, all we will be left with is a few global technology giants. And nobody will make documentaries mourning their passing.

No life, or style for retirement, it seems, with magazine



Blair's latest Brexit re-referendum rambblings brought forth an interesting response



Gordon Brown in his days as PM – as chancellor, he is accused of targeting Mr Rhodes



TV fly-on-the-wall show 24 Hours In Police Custody – making no assumptions

Feeling ruff after taking supplement

I MENTIONED Virol a few days ago. It was a food supplement which vanished from the market some years back. A reader, after some research, points out that the ingredients of Virol sound remarkably like dog food. Well, it never did me any harm. Woof.

INTRIGUINGLY, a Google search for Virol will take you to an Amazon web page offering three varieties of malt extract and a weatherproof masonry sealer. Versatile, or what?

AH, the eternal steely pragmatism of the British. An online debate about Tony Blair's suggestion for a second Brexit referendum brought forth this gem: "While the message was okay, nonetheless after reading it, could someone please shoot the ****ing messenger."

ANOTHER flurry of messages follows up the issue of litter around Loch Lomond which I touched on recently. "The answer is education," declares one contributor. Really? And how many hours in the classroom does it take to convey the message: "Don't drop that."?

THERE were times during the Chancellorship of Gordon Brown when I thought he had it in for me personally. His budgets seemed surgically targeted at me for earning a little more than the minimum wage, using a company car and having a fuel card, while he was bunging more money to the old and frail. Year after year, Brown took money out of my wage packet and gave it to my mother-in-law. Was this his revenge for one or two (okay, maybe more) difficult

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



interviews? Anyway, the Tory government has now taken up the hounding of me. In the crusade against pollution, I am targeted for driving a diesel car, for having solid-fuel central heating and for keeping the baronial hall tepid with a couple of log-burning stoves. All may be banned in the name of cleaner air. Dare no-one suggest the problem could be solved if selfish people learned to breathe a little less?

WHEN a man in Ohio phoned police to report that a pig was following him home, the cops assumed the caller was drunk. Not so. He was sober and the animal was a domestic pig in need of company. I bet we were all reminded of the poem about the drunk who falls asleep in the gutter next to a pig. There are several versions but they all end with a lady, disgusted at the sight exclaiming: "You can tell a man who boozes by the company he chooses." / And the pig got up and slowly walked away.

SOMETHING called a "Lifestyle Retirement Magazine" has just arrived from Legal & General. Dear God above – is this the future? The front cover shows an old bloke with a grey Corby-like beard riding a bike while wearing a plastic helmet. On his feet are trainers, worn over black socks, presumably to indicate he is

English. They call it "lifestyle" but what sort of life is this and where, oh where, is the style? Turn to page 5 of the L&G leaflet and there's a graphic of a toilet roll. Why? Because according to a survey, one of the things that surprises people when they retire is "How many toilet rolls we use." For the record, I know several retired folk who don't own a bike or a beard, and who never, ever fret about bog-paper. And if they found themselves morphing into Jeremy Corbyn I'm sure they'd do something about it. If this is the image most people have about retirement it may explain why so many are happy to keep on working.

EVERY journalist knows that sinking feeling experienced by the detective in 24 Hours in Police Custody (C4) when the threads fall apart and you realise the great story you're working on isn't a story at all. In this case it came when an officer uncovered medical records showing that a woman found with her throat slashed – and assumed to be a murder victim – had a long history of self-harming, including trying to cut her throat. But then the only eye-witness had already told cops she had seen the "victim" alone at the death scene. I found it surprising that anybody, in this case the woman's oddball partner, could be arrested and held in custody on little more than an assumption. They tell us we're innocent until proved guilty!

BUT then police and hacks work differently. For example, "never assume anything" is one of the golden rules of journalism. At least I assume it is.

TALKING POINT



Music to my ears to say I'm a rock chick

LIKE Cher without the surgery, Debbie Harry on a quiet day and Madonna if she ate cake – I too am an ageing rock chick. As a sassy teen rocker I can remember looking at 'old' people at gigs – probably aged about 35 to my young eyes – and wondering why would they still be turning out for concerts at their age?

Today I am more than a little over the age of 35 and still go to as many gigs as ever. Admittedly my back and calf muscles ache the following day. And though my jeans are still too tight it is in very different places and more to do with a hearty supper rather than some DIY tapering on my mum's sewing machine. I tend to take a coat these days too.

The standing/dancing area remains my ticket of choice and, being vertically challenged, I need to get close enough to see. Though when going to watch the 'classic' bands still going from my youth I find they are often all-seaters now. Even the singers tend to need a sit down.

I can still be found at the odd music festival – but NEVER in the camping area. Camping at music festivals is something that can only be enjoyed by the young or insomniacs. Give me a nice warm hotel bed and an en suite bathroom every time. My back isn't up to a camp bed or deflating airbed anymore.

Sadly, there seems something a little undignified to see women of a certain age still staking a claim to their place in the music scene. Isn't it time Madonna covered up a little and stopped subjecting us to images of her muscles and veiny arms? And I don't doubt that the excitable young things bounding around at Kasabian view my bestie and I as a pair of Edina and Patsy clones.

In truth I always thought I would 'grow out of' loud and live music at some point and develop a love of easy listening and maybe even classical. Thankfully it never happened.

I dislike the rapid-chat-to-music that my daughter listens to and can regularly be heard shouting mumpily 'turn that row down'. Would it kill her to listen to a guitar band every now and again?

But music still lifts my mood, evokes uncharacteristic energy and movement from me and brings a smile to my face. So I have no intention of giving up going to concerts – I am an ageing rocker and proud of it.

I once saw a 'motivational' plaque with the message 'Life is a piece of music, and you are supposed to be dancing.' Well I am still dancing – just not in the the mosh pit anymore.

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We make it



Great strides made during walk week

LIVING Streets' Walk to School Week is over for another year and we'd like to thank everyone across Dudley who contributed to making it a massive success.

Nearly 32,000 pupils from Dudley joined in with pupils across the UK to enjoy the many benefits of walking to school.

Motor vehicles are the biggest source of air pollution and one in four cars on the road at peak times are on the school run. More children walking to school

means fewer vehicles on the road and improved air quality for everyone.

Families in Dudley can know that they've helped be part of the solution this Walk to School Week by swapping four wheels for two feet.

Walking to school not only improves our air quality but is a great way for children to build more exercise into their daily lives, helping them to arrive to school healthier, happier and ready to learn.

Once again, a huge thank you and

congratulations to everyone who took part in this year's Walk to School Week - with your help we'll get more children experiencing a healthier and happier walk to school.

The week may be over but the walking doesn't have to stop. Parents, carers and teachers can head to livingstreets.org.uk/walktoschool for tips and advice on continuing to make great strides.

KEVIN CROASDALE
Schools Manager, Living Streets

Too much wasted on EU and aid

I see some waste-of-space 'discussion' group recently suggested that pensioners should pay more in taxes to support the young. What utter garbage!

I paid tax and full National Insurance contributions for 46 years, as did many of my friends and work colleagues and I'm still paying £1,100 a year income tax on my pension because, knowing that the UK state pension was the lowest in Europe, I had the foresight to pay additional voluntary contributions into my works pension.

Most of the income tax and National Insurance contributions was, and continues to be, squandered by successive useless British governments on such things as the 'ring fenced' foreign aid budget and on our continued £70 million a day payments to the European Union dictatorship which, according to reports, most young people support!

MR R A SARGEANT
Dudley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL

dudley.chron@
expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Code of Practice: Our policy is to correct errors as soon as we can. The Chronicles adhere to the Editors' Code of Practice, which can be seen at

It's drivers that cause accidents, not the junction

ISN'T all the talk about the 'dangerous junction' at Gospel End Street and Vicar Street rather missing the point? Drivers cause the accidents, not the junction.

These accidents are caused by one of a number of obvious issues - drivers driving too fast; not indicating their intentions; or just plain impatience.

All are symptoms of what is becoming painfully obvious, the general standard of driving is appalling.

And it's not just the young drivers, older drivers who should know better are just as bad.

Speed bumps might help but I'm not convinced.

ALAN ASHMAN
Sedgley

Volunteers are helping children

ACROSS the West Midlands hundreds of inspiring people are helping to transform young lives with volunteering work and supporting The Children's Society.

This Volunteers Week (1-7 June) we would like to say a huge thank you to the 2,964 supporters in the West Midlands who help our charity in so many different ways and support vulnerable children. There are 29,309 children living in the West Midlands classed as children 'in need' and 6,455 in care. The Children's Society's volunteers, campaigners and supporters make a real difference to so many young people by supporting them directly in our services, by volunteering in our charity shops, by organising events, donating and raising vital funds and awareness.

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MATTHEW REED
Chief Executive
The Children's Society

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Police bosses now ditching 30-second target for 101 calls

WEST Midlands Police has ditched self-imposed targets for answering 101 calls, branding them 'no longer fit for purpose'. The force set itself a standard of answering all non-emergency calls inside 30 seconds.

But it has repeatedly failed to hit the target, with such calls usually answered in between two and three minutes. Bosses say they are dropping the target as call handlers now spend longer speaking to 101 callers with the aim of resolving queries immediately.

Shoppers are urged to fight fakes

PEOPLE are being urged to be vigilant and avoid buying counterfeit goods at markets or car boot sales.

Staffordshire County Council's trading standards team co-ordinates the national Real Deal markets campaign in the county. Market organisers can sign up to support the fight to halt the sale of counterfeit goods.

Council communities leader Gill Heath said: "We want people to avoid the pitfalls of counterfeit goods - protecting themselves and legitimate businesses.

"Counterfeit goods can be hard to detect just to look at, so a knock down price is a good indicator. These items are shoddy, they may be dangerous."

Some of the hidden dangers of counterfeit goods include counterfeit alcohol such as vodka contains dangerous chemicals, counterfeit perfume can often burn skin or leave a rash and may contain lead.

The force is also prioritising 999 emergency calls, a policy which has seen a vast improvement in performance over the last 12 months.

WMP took nearly 1.5-million non-emergency 101 calls last year. Chief Superintendent Sally Bourner, head of force contact, said: "We've previously set ourselves a standard of striving to answer 101 calls inside 30 seconds; this is not a national guideline but one we introduced ourselves some years ago.

Demand

"That time target is no longer fit for purpose as demand is changing and we now spend longer speaking to 101 callers with the aim to resolve their query at the first opportunity.

"We have now removed the arbitrary non-emergency answering time target. However, non-emergency contact has improved in the last 12 months such that we're still routinely answering half of all 101 calls inside 30 seconds. We would also encourage people with non-emergency policing queries to go to the force's new web portal."

Figures show the force now answers more than nine in 10 of all emergency calls inside the national 10-second standard.

Wool ewe baa-lieve it's fun on the farm



Hollie Webb with Wayne Vale during sheep shearing at Sandwell Park Farm

VISITORS from all over the Black Country attended a Woolly Weekend held at Sandwell Valley.

Over the Spring Bank Holiday long weekend, youngsters were given the chance to meet chicks, goats, and of course, the sheep at Sandwell Park Farm.

Activities included goat milking, sheep shearing and chick handling and, despite disruption from the storms, the event at the Salters Lane urban farm was a success.

Sandwell Council's leisure chief Councillor Bill Gavan said: "These events are very popular and it is a chance for local children to get in touch with the natural world down in the valley.

Nature

"The valley offers some wonderful opportunities for families to engage with nature and to walk through the woodlands and for fun in the adventure playground area."

Eight-year-old Hollie Webb from Halesowen was shown by farm worker Wayne Vale how sheep are sheared of their wool coats.

Sandwell Park Farm is a fully restored working Victorian farm with grazing meadows, a traditional farmyard, walled kitchen gardens, Grade II listed buildings, a small museum and an award-winning tea rooms.

Man stabbed in gang attack outside shop

A MAN was stabbed after a car tried to run him down in a shocking attack in broad daylight at Black Country petrol station.

Armed police swarmed to the busy Texaco garage at Dudley Port, where a gang knifed a man and smashed up the car he was in with baseball bats.

The victim had tried to flee the group after a car attempted to mow him down as he walked along Park Lane East. He jumped into a passing car before the group in the other vehicle gave chase. The black Vauxhall Corsa pulled onto the forecourt of the Texaco garage, which also has a Morrisons Daily store, and the vehicle's windows were smashed as stunned shoppers looked on.

The victim, a 31-year-old man, was stabbed in the leg. He was taken to hospital for treatment for injuries, which are not thought to be life-threatening.

Armed police arrived at the scene at around 7.50pm on Wednesday (May 23). Officers locked down the area with a cordon in place.

A West Midlands Police spokesman said: "Police are investigating a disorder that took place outside Morrisons on Dudley Port."

Anyone with information is asked to call West Midlands Police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Hall to host Dream picnic performance

AN open air performance of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream is being staged in the grounds of Hagley Hall. Touring group Quantum Theatre will be performing the play on July 7 at 7pm.

The audience is invited to bring along picnics. Tickets are £14 for adults and £8 for children available on 0845 450 5157.

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Vampires and zombies at castle fright nights

DUDLEY Castle will become the dramatic backdrop for a double bill of classic horror movies this summer when the castle courtyard is again turned into an open-air cinema.

For the third year running Flatpack will bring movies to the 11th century castle yard and, following last year's screening of An American Werewolf in London, it will see a pair of fright nights offered in August.

Influential horror movie Night of the Living Dead, which really started the modern zombie genre, will be screened on Friday, August 3, and then on Saturday August 4, it is stylish 1980s teenaged vampire flick The Lost Boys starring Corey Haim and Kiefer Sutherland.

Zoo Manager, Matt Lewis, said: "Film goes need to bring a chair or a blanket to sit on and then can get comfy ready to watch the cult classics in an incredible atmosphere."

Both films are 15 certificate and doors open each evening at 7pm. Both nights will have warm-up films shown at 9pm and the feature presentation will kick off at 9.30pm. There will be hot food, a licensed bar, mood lighting and special effects. It is £10 per film and a double bill ticket deal is £18 with concessions available. To book call (01384) 215313. Visit www.dudleyzoo.org.uk/double-bill-of-cult-classics/

Lydia's pedal power in memory of friend



Lydia Pountney, from Stourbridge, on her cycling challenge

A WOMAN from Stourbridge has completed a 47-mile bike ride in memory of her childhood friend who died suddenly.

Lydia Pountney, from Pedmore, took on the Peak District Pioneer Adventure Cross bike challenge in Derbyshire in memory of her friend, Steph Oakley, who tragically died from sudden arrhythmic death syndrome in November.

Steph, from Kingswinford, was just 26 when she passed away.

Nurse Lydia, 28, said: "Our dads used to work together so she was a family friend and we used to holiday together. We have a lot of memories."

Lydia, who completed the long uphill course in seven hours, was also raising money for SADS, a charity which funds research and medical equipment to prevent premature sudden cardiac death.

She added: "It was very hot and hard work but very rewarding and worth it."

She has beaten her original fundraising target at £500, so far raising more than £900 with more to be collected.

One in four spend their life indoors

A QUARTER of people in West Midlands spend almost their entire lives indoors where the air can be up to five times more polluted than outside.

New research by YouGov reveals an 'indoor generation' that are largely unaware of the significant health risks posed by spending too much time indoors – especially on children, whose bedrooms can be the most polluted room in the house.

The survey asked people how much time they spend indoors with 25 per cent of people in the region saying between 21 and 24 hours each day, and a further 29 per cent of people said they spend between 19 and 20 hours inside.

It also revealed that the majority of people in the West Midlands (58 per cent) believe indoor air quality is cleaner or no better than outside, when it can be up to five times more polluted.

Amnesty extended as more guns taken off the streets

A FORTNIGHT firearms surrender campaign to tackle violent crime has been extended.

West Midlands Police's crack-down will run for a further week, now ending this Sunday, June 3.

The force has seen more than 70 firearms handed in so far during the campaign.

Weapons can be surrendered at any of their stations, including Wolverhampton, Bloxwich, Brierley Hill, Birmingham, West Bromwich, Wol-

verhampton and Bloxwich. They can also be handed in by calling West Midlands Police on 101 and arranging for officers to make a home visit.

So far in 2018, police have taken 53 firearms off the streets amid 45 reported firearms discharges, compared to 62 in the same period last year. The force's last surrender saw nearly 250 potentially lethal weapons and ammunition handed in.

Detective Inspector Rod Rose said: "I would urge anyone who is holding a gun, maybe through fear or misguided loyalty to someone else,

to hand it in now, otherwise the alternative could be up to five years in prison."

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson added: "Every weapon taken off the streets, is potentially a life saved. The consequences of violent crime have a devastating impact."

The history of live weapons handed in will be checked for any evidence of criminal use. The firearms will either be destroyed at West Midlands Police armoury or retained for training exercises.

Former paperboy murder suspect has heart attack

A FORMER suspect in the Carl Bridgewater murder has suffered a heart attack, his second major health scare since a TV documentary appeared to implicate him in the paperboy's death at Yet Tree Farm in 1978.

Pensioner Bert Spencer, originally from Stourbridge, is recovering at his Lincolnshire home following surgery. He claims the attack was brought on by 40 years of stress from having been such a high-profile suspect, exacerbated by the Channel 4 programme two years ago which revisited the crime. He said: "There is only so much a human being can take. It's inevitable that so much stress has had a serious effect on my health."

The 77-year-old had been moving heavy flowerpots minutes before he collapsed.



Bert Spencer

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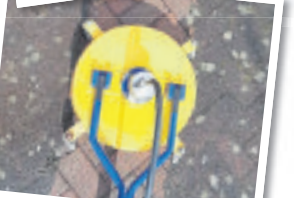
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Vintage transport fair steams in at Himley again

A HIGHLY popular annual Vintage Transport and Country Fair will return to Himley Hall and Park at the weekend.

The event will run on Saturday and Sunday with organisers promising it will be bigger and better than before.

Now in its fifth year, the day has developed from being the former Steamer Sunday to a vintage vehicle display and country fair attracting exhibitors from across the country.

Steam engines, fairground organs, tractors, classic cars, vintage motorbikes, cycles and vintage fire engines will all be on display.

Councillor Ian Kettle, Dudley Council's cabinet member for tourism, said: "There is plenty for people of all ages to enjoy and visitors will have the opportunity to chat to owners about their well-loved exhibits."

There will also be arts and craft stalls, street food, vintage stalls, hand-crafted collectables, a children's funfair, chainsaw carving, radio car club and live music at the free event.

The fair will run from 10am to 4pm on both days. Parking costs £5. For more information, visit www.himleyhallandpark.co.uk/vintagefair



Himley Hall and Park will be the setting again for the biggest Vintage Transport and Country Fair so far

Killer driver's appeal kicked out by judges

A DANGEROUS driver who killed a great-grandfather in a crash on a Black Country road has failed to have his 10-year sentence reduced.

Personal trainer Kamran Raja, 37, was driving at 'motorway speeds' on the A4123 Wolverhampton Road in Oldbury just before he struck 85-year-old Edward Harris' Honda in April 2016.

He pleaded guilty to causing the pensioner's death by dangerous driving at Wolverhampton Crown Court last September but later applied to the Court of Appeal against the length of his prison term. However the Appeal judges have concluded he deserves every day of his decade-long sentence and have rejected the bid.

Raja was travelling at almost double the 40mph limit shortly before ploughing into the Honda at the junction with Castle Road East, propelling the car 100ft up the road

Motorway to bypass region back on agenda

PLANS for a controversial motorway that will skirt the Black Country and carve through sections of Staffordshire are back.

The Western Orbital scheme – also known as the Wolverhampton bypass – was twice rejected in the 1990s and 2000s due to concerns over its environmental impact.

But a new report to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) reveals that transport body Midlands Connect is to use part of a £4 million funding pot to scope plans to revitalise the scheme.

Now dubbed the Western Strategic Route, the motorway would cut a 40-mile swathe through countryside from the M5 junction 4a at Bromsgrove, to junction 2 of the M54 near the i54 business park.

It would pass Codsall, Codsall Wood, Perton, Pattingham, Wombourne, Dudley, Stourbridge and Kidderminster.

South Staffordshire MP Gavin Williamson has accused Midlands Connect of attempting to push through the plans 'by stealth'.

He said: "It is of grave concern that Midlands Connect appear to be bringing these failed and rejected plans back to life.

"This proposed new motorway or bypass would rip through the heart of the South Staffordshire green belt and cause irreversible environmental damage to unblemished and cherished countryside.

"My constituents will be shocked to see that plans

By Peter Madeley

which have been repeatedly opposed and dropped are suddenly back on the table by stealth. I will be writing to Midlands Connect seeking urgent clarity."

Midlands Connect says the new route could form part of a new regional 'motorway hub' that would support the regional and national economy.

They are due to reveal more details on the scheme early next month.

Maria Machancoses, Midlands Connect director, said the route was 'one of a wide range of proposals that requires further analysis. Walsall councillor Richard Worrall, chair of the WMCA's transport delivery committee, said: "I think that if you want to ease the burden of traffic you really need people to use other means of transport.

"I'm not sure building more motorways is the answer." A consultation is under way over proposals for a link road between the

M54 and M6 North/M6 Toll.

Fundraising Beacon walk in blindfolds

A FUNDRAISING blindfold walk is being held at the Beacon Centre for the Blind in Sedgley next month.

The Beacon Blindfold Walk on Saturday, July 7, from 10am will see pairs taking on the mile-long challenge around the grounds.

One will walk in a blindfold to the half way point where they will swap. As well as raising money, the event aims to give a better understanding of the issues blind people face on a daily basis.

It costs £10 for adults and £5 for children aged 12 to 16 to enter and people taking part are also being encouraged to get sponsorship to help the charity.

Places can be booked on 01902 880111 or through the www.beaconvision.org website.

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12 Concerns halted the merger of services

Halesowen Chronicle Thursday, May 31, 2018

A PLANNED merger of health services in the Black Country was ditched after it emerged the new model would have operated at a loss.

Transforming Care Together would have combined Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust.

The project, which was two years in the making, aimed to save £7 million a year but in April, following changes in each trust's financial position, the merger was ditched.

A Black Country Partnership (BCP) spokesman said: "The business case for the integrated organisation was developed in early 2017.

"By February/March 2018 the financial position of each trust had changed and a revised financial projection suggested the integrated organisation would be operating at a loss.

Sensible

"Clearly it would not be sensible to undertake integration in circumstances where sustainable patient services could not be provided."

There were also concerns about how the health services would be led within the merger, the partnership's spokesman added.

BCP is now looking at setting up a partnership with Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership in mental health, learning disability and children's services.

The trusts will also look to save money over the coming months, the spokesman added.

65ft mast is compared to Tolkien villain

A 65FT TALL phone mast near JRR Tolkien's childhood home has been compared to the work of evil Lord of the Rings villain Sauron. Vodafone has obtained planning permission for the monopole at Cole Bank Road in Moseley despite significant concerns from Birmingham Museums Trust.

They argued it was too close to the Grade II listed Sarehole Mill as well as the fantasy author's former home on Wake Green Road. A summary of their objection said: "Sarehole Mill is a national asset with connections to Birmingham's industrial history and to the internationally loved stories of JRR Tolkien whose childhood home is nearby. "[The mast] would be extremely obtrusive and form a blight on the historic surroundings.

"[It is] not far from Tolkien's childhood home on Wake Green Road, he hated the desecration of beautiful landscapes by ugly and inappropriate development. I suspect he would see the mast as an example of the work of Saruman or Sauron, and would not want this installation to be inflicted on his beloved Shire."

The trust also argued it would obstruct the annual festival celebrating the Lord of the Rings and Hobbit writer.

There were 11 formal objections submitted to Birmingham City Council while councillors Liz Clements, Tim Huxtable and Lou Robson all opposed. A 49-name petition against it was also submitted at a late stage. The council's planning committee approved the mast on Thursday.

Parks host half term play days

A BLACK Country charity is running a series of free play sessions this week.

Groundwork West Midlands is behind Let's Play Sandwell events in parks across Oldbury, Tipton and Wednesbury, running until Friday, between 11am and 4pm every day. The sessions, funded by Sandwell Council, will give youngsters aged six to 12 the chance to get stuck into a range of exciting activities including sports, scavenger hunts and arts and crafts.

Hallelujah! This soul sister is leading act

SINGER Keshia Herbert from West Bromwich is stepping into Whoopi Goldberg and Alexandra Burke's shoes by taking the lead role of feisty Deloris Van Cartier, in Quarry Bank Musical Theatre Society's production of Sister Act.

The musical, which was a hit movie and stage musical, is being staged by the amateur theatre group runs at Brierley Hill Civic Hall from Tuesday to Saturday, June 5-9.

Keshia, aged 29, is currently a member of a choir called Legally Sound, organised by her employers, Higgs & Sons and together with her fellow choir members has performed in and won the Legal Harmony Choir competition, which was held in London in 2016.

Sister Act requires a very special leading lady and when Keshia heard the group were looking for Deloris, she just couldn't wait to join them.

"The role is challenging because there are a lot of songs and dances to learn as well as the dialogue," Keshia said. "But our director and musical director have been so supportive and the members have been helpful, offering their time to go through lines, dances and songs with me."

"Most of all, I love the camaraderie. They have all been performing together for a very long time but have made me feel like part of the family."

Sister Act is the story of a nightclub singer sent to a convent on a witness protection scheme. For tickets visit www.qbmts.org.uk website.



Praise be! Keshia Herbert stars as Deloris in Sister Act at Brierley Hill Civic Hall next week

Best year yet as 42m visitors flock to see Brum's sights



Tourism Minister Michael Ellis enjoying a visit to Birmingham's canals

BIRMINGHAM'S tourism sector witnessed its most successful year in history last year, with hotel revenue, the number of visitors and the amount they spent all hitting record highs.

Figures just released by the West Midlands Growth Company and research body Global Tourism Solutions (GTS), reveal Birmingham welcomed 41.8 million visitors in 2017.

The amount of money they spent in the area hit £7.1 billion – an increase of more than nine per cent in the space of a year.

Average hotel occupancy stood at 75 per cent, matching the previous record set in 2016, whilst RevPAR (revenue per available room) was £51 in value, the highest figure ever recorded.

The city welcomed the most tourists during September, a month that included major events such as the Natwest T20 Finals Day at Edgbaston Stadium and Birmingham's largest outdoor festival, the Birmingham Weekender.

The region's literary heritage was celebrated as 2017 marked the 80th anniversary of

By Simon Penfold

JRR Tolkien's classic fantasy novel The Hobbit. Heritage was also the sub-sector to see the greatest increase in visitor numbers, up 12 per cent on 2016.

The number of full-time equivalent jobs supported by the visitor economy has risen by 7.2 per cent since 2016, from 70,635 to 75,748.

The announcement of the latest figures coincides with a visit to the region from Tourism Minister Michael Ellis. The visit marks the arrival of a prominent new tourism project to the area – England's Waterways, supported by the Discover England Fund.

Cultural

The project, led by the West Midlands Growth Company, is intended to inspire international visitors to explore the canal networks and surrounding cultural offer throughout Birmingham and the wider Midlands region.

Mr Ellis said: "Birmingham is one of the UK's leading destinations, with excellent attractions, nightlife and hospitality. Following the hugely successful Commonwealth Games handover and the arrival of Dippy the Diplo-



The Natwest T20 Finals Day at Edgbaston Stadium in September proved a major draw for visitors



Birmingham Hippodrome, bringing in the crowds



Dippy the Diplodocus recently arrived in Brum too

docus, this positive tourism trend looks set to continue well into the future.

"The wider Midlands region boasts a charming canal network surrounded by vibrant green spaces and unique heritage attractions. We are pleased to be helping to attract even more people to experience these picturesque waterways through our Discover England Fund."

Over the last 10 years, Birmingham has attracted growing numbers of overnight visitors. The total number of staying visitors has increased by a third (1.2 million) since 2008. The top destinations visitors are travelling from include Ireland, Germany and the US.

Neil Snowball, chief executive of Warwickshire County Cricket Club, said: "The biggest sporting and cultural events come to Birmingham because of the outstanding experience that is provided by the city stakeholders working together in partnership. The warm welcome and logistical ease is something that is reported time and again by visitors to Edgbaston."

"Last year, the stadium hosted five games in the ICC Champions Trophy, England's first ever Day/Night Investec Test match and NatWest T20 Blast Finals Day, which was predicted to have generated around £45 million

towards the local economy. We're thrilled that Edgbaston could play such a major role in Birmingham's leisure offering last year."

"With test matches against India, Australia and the ICC Cricket World Cup on the horizon, we can look forward to continued momentum in the city's tourism offering."

Mark Payne, general manager at Park Regis Birmingham, added: "These record-breaking figures highlight the growing potential of the UK's second city."

"Birmingham is home to a thriving food and hospitality offering, with a globally renowned arts and culture scene, underpinned by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and The Birmingham Hippodrome. The recent handover for the 2022 Commonwealth Games has made it very real and clear that Birmingham is the city to watch."

"Due to the increasing number of visitors to the city, The Park Regis Birmingham has been going from strength to strength since opening."

"We have recently broken ground on our new sky-high conferencing suite on Level 16 to accommodate the growing professional community in the city. Birmingham is fast becoming the first choice for delegates – and we can't wait to welcome them."

Team Ashwood score double Chelsea triumph

A COLOURFUL display from a Kingswinford garden centre won the President's Award and a Gold Award at the Royal Horticultural Society's prestigious Chelsea Flower Show.

Ashwood Nurseries' display of beautiful early spring flowering hellebores caught the eyes of judges in the Great Pavilion.

The colourful herbaceous plants were making their debut this year, the first time that hellebores have been shown as a single exhibit at Chelsea.

Nurseries owner John Massey VMH and Ashwood's hellebore breeder Kevin Belcher masterminded the project to showcase their world-renowned Helleborus x hybridus Ashwood Garden Hybrids, widely regarded as some of the best hellebores ever produced.

The double accolade, combined with it being a debut for a single exhibit of hellebores at Chelsea, resulted in plenty of media attention. Carol Klein visited the stand, interviewing Mr Massey for the BBC TV Chelsea Flower Show coverage.

Weather

Plants earmarked by Mr Belcher for flowering at Chelsea came out of the cold store into the May sunshine and burst into life. However, this Spring's weather has been testing them with the plants constantly on the move - windy conditions meant that they had to be re-located to a more protected site, then very warm temperatures resulted in them being returned to the cold store more than once to prevent them peaking too soon.

'Team Ashwood' led by manager Karrina Gilbert helped prepare and



The two awards at Chelsea



The hellebores on display



Owner John Massey with Kevin Belcher transport the plants and materials, as well as building the exhibit and manning the stand. Retired Ashwood breeder Philip Baulk returned to bring his expertise in exhibiting.

It was the fourth visit to Chelsea by the team from the Ashwood Lower Lane nursery. In 1996 a lewisia exhibit won a gold medal followed by another



Mr Belcher moves the hellebores in 2005 for hydrangeas. In 2016 an hepatica exhibit scooped gold as well as the Diamond Jubilee Award for the best exhibit in The Great Pavilion.

Mr Massey said: "Everything we've worked for over the last year was put to the test. The real stars of the show are the plants themselves and we just have to hope they perform on cue."

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Deadliest plants may be lying in wait for you

BRITISH gardeners have been warned to beware of poisonous and toxic plants lurking in their flowerbeds this spring.

As spring rolls around and thousands of gardening enthusiasts take to their backyards to preen and plant, the garden experts at BillyOh.com have compiled a list of the ten deadly plants we should be steering away from this year.

Whilst to many, poisonous petals and toxic leaves might only be found in the pages of their favourite childhood fairy tales, the reality is that some of the nation's favourite and most common domestic and wild plants are actually harbouring harmful – and even deadly – toxins.

A spokesman for BillyOh.com said: "Being killed by eating part of a deadly plant sounds like something from a horror movie, or something that could only happen to somebody living in the most tropical countries.

"But in actual fact, some of the most toxic plants and flowers are perfectly capable of growing and surviving in the UK – and they do so in thousands of homes and gardens.

"While most are only deadly if consumed in large quantities, they still pack nasty toxins that can cause some pretty horrible side effects.

"From potentially suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea, to hallucinations and convulsions – these are some of many reasons Brits should educate themselves on the potentially harmful plants hiding in and around their homes."

Here are eight deadly plants that could be hiding in your home or garden:

FOXGLOVE

Don't let the pretty colours and striking appearance of the foxglove flower fool you – these bell-shaped blooms contain a compound used for treating heart failure, so eating them is like taking an unregulated dose of heart medicine.

HYDRANGEA

These popular blossoms contain a toxin that we'll all be scarily familiar with: cyanide! It can cause shortness of breath, dizziness, fainting, and a rapid pulse, along with a drop in blood pressure. But don't worry, pets and humans would need to ingest quite a bit for the effects of this flower to be fatal.

POINSETTIA

Most often seen around the festive period, the milky sap in the veins of this plant is actually quite toxic. There have only ever been two documented cases of them causing human death, but you'll want to keep your children and pets away from them nonetheless, as vomiting and diarrhoea could be rife if ingested.

PURPLE NIGHTSHADE (pictured bottom)

Steer very clear of this one – though the entire plant is toxic, if you pop just a handful of berries in your mouth you'll physically be incapable of calling for help. After you lose your voice, respiratory complications, intense digestive disruption, and violent convulsions begin – the combination of which has proven fatal.

LILY-OF-THE-VALLEY (pictured top)

These tiny, white bell-like shaped flowers pack a potent, sweet-smelling scent despite its small size, but just a bite can cause headaches, hot flushes, hallucinations and irritability – not to mention red blotches of cold, clammy skin. Even the water you place cut lily-of-the-valley flowers in can contain deadly traces of convallatoxin, which intensifies the heart's contractions.

OLEANDER

Just one leaf from this striking flower has been known to harm a child! Symptoms of poisoning include drowsiness, slowed heart rate and uncontrollable shaking.

WATER HEMLOCK

These small white flowers are some of the prettiest wildflowers you can get, but if you have curious pets especially, you should remove them. The toxin in white hemlock smells like carrot yet wastes no time in attacking the central nervous system, causing severe seizures and convulsions that turn deadly as a result of asphyxia and cardiovascular collapse.

MISTLETOE

Munching on a couple of leaves, berries, or shoots – or drinking mistletoe-flavored tea – will cause abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

Ways to make your home and property safe



Security cameras and lights can protect your home

MOST of us take pride in our homes, writes Claire Spreadbury.

It's our haven – the place where we can relax, be ourselves and feel safe.

But in order to keep ourselves, our houses and all of our belongings protected, we need to take home security seriously, and a lot of us don't.

We lock our doors when we go out or go to bed, but that's often the extent of our safeguarding. We nip out for the day leaving windows open, and many of us don't have alarms.

Here, Anthony Neary, managing director of home security retailer safe.co.uk, shares his expert tips on steps you can take to help keep your home safe and sound...

MAKE SURE YOUR HOME LOOKS LOVED

"Keeping your home looking well-loved and maintained is a good first step to deterring thieves," says Neary. "They're less likely to strike if it looks like there are people around on a regular basis."

Tidy away any tools, bins and ladders, as these can all give burglars a helping hand if they're looking to gain quick entry, and get yourself an alarm. The Yale SR-320 Smart Home Alarm Kit, £249 (safe.co.uk), gives you complete control via your smartphone.

BE LOCK SAVVY

Neary says: "Burglars will often scout a location before attempting a burglary, so ensure you keep valuable items (including car keys) away from windows, and make sure

your front and back doors are fitted with high-quality locks that meet British Standard BS3621. Burglars will check the quality of locks on windows and whether there are two locks on the front door.

FIT LIGHTS AND CAMERAS – EVEN FAKE ONES HELP

"Security lights are a huge deterrent, as are prominent CCTV cameras. Quality CCTV cameras and alarm kits are much more accessible these days and don't have to cost the earth – but you could even fit a dummy camera for a quick fix, while you get your security sorted," Neary suggests. Try the Swann DVR8-4575 8 Channel HD 1080p - 4 Camera True Detect CCTV Kit, £289 (safe.co.uk), which detects heat and motion, records the footage onto its own hard drive, and can be watched back on a smartphone.

INVEST IN A SAFE

"Recent research we conducted found that less than one in 10 of us keep spare keys in a safe, instead opting for doormats and plant pots," Neary says. "Safes are a cost-effective way of keeping spare keys and other small items locked away from prying eyes.

PUT YOUR LIGHTS ON A TIMER

"Our research also found that over a third of us admit to leaving for a holiday without any home security measures in place, putting property at risk," says Neary. "A cheap and easy way to deter burglars while your home is empty is to set light timers. Make your home look occupied and have a trusted friend or family member check in."

Keeping it in the family with your Rhododendrons

ROSS UNDERWOOD

Head Gardener at Hodnet Hall



WHEN is a Rhododendron not a Rhododendron? The answer is when the plant in question is an Azalea.

The Rhododendron family is huge and like any large family it has many branches and sub-branches and claims of kinship can be complicated and even contentious. One large division is between Azaleas and Rhododendrons. All Azaleas are in fact members of the Rhododendron family and I would argue they make up some of the most garden worthy members. If they were part of may family I'd certainly invite them to my parties!

Many people's image of rhododendrons are of large sprawling evergreen shrubs that grace the spreading woodlands or lawns around stately homes. Often, because they are evergreen they have a reputation of short lived interest. Azaleas tend to be somewhat smaller than rhododendrons and although all rhododendrons are evergreen there are many deciduous Azaleas.

Among the deciduous Azaleas the Ghent, Knaphill and Mollis types are worth seeking out. They have excellent autumn colour and although sometimes the flowers can be individually small they come in bright and sunny colours that make up for any diminutive flower size. R. luteum is a yellow flowered species that has a heady scent which it has imparted to many of its offspring.

Hardy

Deciduous Azaleas are all hardy and can grow up to one and a half to two metres in ten years. They can be planted in sun or light shade in and acid soil or compost and propagated easily from layers, cuttings or division. A few of them can be prone to mildew especially in dry weather so a small blast of fungicide or a foliage feed of calcified seaweed always comes in handy. If you have room for a selection of more than one plant then you can have flower and scent from April until July.

My favourite is the double yellow flowered R. narcissiflorum which flowers in May and June and has attractive foliage in autumn and good scent.

More dainty and compact are the evergreen Japanese Azaleas which represent probably the highest proportion of Azaleas grown in the trade. This is because many of them are grown for sale as house plants, particularly around Christmas.

These varieties are not hardy though there are many which are. All of them have small foliage which sometimes colours in winter though they are evergreen. A typi-



R. Luteum is a yellow flowered species that has a heady scent

cal specimen might reach a metre over 10 years making them suitable for planting in containers and even window boxes. They prefer more shade and moisture than the deciduous types and resent exposure to cold winds.

Evergreen Azaleas make good edging for

borders or along paths. Their dense growth will, over time, suppress weeds which makes them an excellent ground cover. They can be pruned back easily and recover well.

Among my favourites is the bright pink "Hinomayo" which looks wonderful in large drifts.



Hinomayo create a striking impression in pink



Bright colours on this flower

Generally both types of Azalea make excellent companions for other acid or shade lovers especially magnolias, acers, host as and ferns. Some may be loud and brash, some dainty and beautiful but all Azaleas have some quality that is sure to recommend them. After all... family is family!

Peace and love reigns at homecoming concert



It was a triumphant homecoming for Peace in Birmingham with a full house at the O2 Academy 2 venue. Photo by Jonnie Craig

Peace, O2 Academy, Birmingham
ON the title track of the new Peace album frontman Harry Koisser sings 'Kindness Is The New Rock 'n' Roll', but the old rock 'n' roll remains exhilarating when performed by this band of adopted Brummies.

On the final night of a 15-date UK tour to launch their third album, it was a triumphant homecoming for the ferocious four playing their psychedelic-tinged guitar rock to a full house at a hot and heaving O2 Academy 2.

The smaller room added to the atmosphere and may have reminded long term fans of those early days in Digbeth when the Worcestershire band set the city abuzz with their

weaving guitars and Koisser's Bolan-like quavering vocals on their songs about 'lovesick losers'.

On a stage bedecked with flowers, Peace reigned supreme and there was plenty of love for them from the crowd, moshing from the off when Koisser and co opened up with fans' favourites Ocean's Eye and Bloodshake.

In fact, they had been seen on stage earlier when they launched their own backstage invasion of the set by main support act Whenyoung to sing-along with the promising Irish trio, dressed in that band's favoured boiler suits. Nice flossing skills by Peace guitarist Doug Castle!

Peace's 90-minute set featured lots of songs from all three albums. Highlights included their latest anthem Power, savage versions of Money and I'm A Girl, swaggering rocker Shotgun

Hallelujah, the soaring sonic delight of Higher Than The Sun, plus impressive new songs Silverlined and Kindness Is The New Rock 'n' Roll.

Harry in jeans and a silk red shirt (or was it a pyjama top?) was flanked by Doug and his brother Sam on bass, with drummer Dom Boyce sat behind propelling the sound. Harry was in a mood to chat between songs and even invited 17-year-old fan Ed up on stage to celebrate his birthday.

He also performed a new version of old favourite Perfect Skin, on introducing California Daze revealed that it had been written a stone's throw from the venue and gave a gorgeous solo rendition of Float Forever.

It ended where it began for Peace, with their indie rock classic Lovesick. Peace and Love, the perfect combination. LEON BURAKOWSKI

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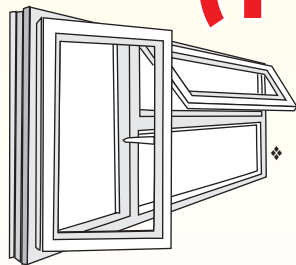
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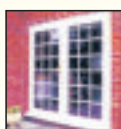


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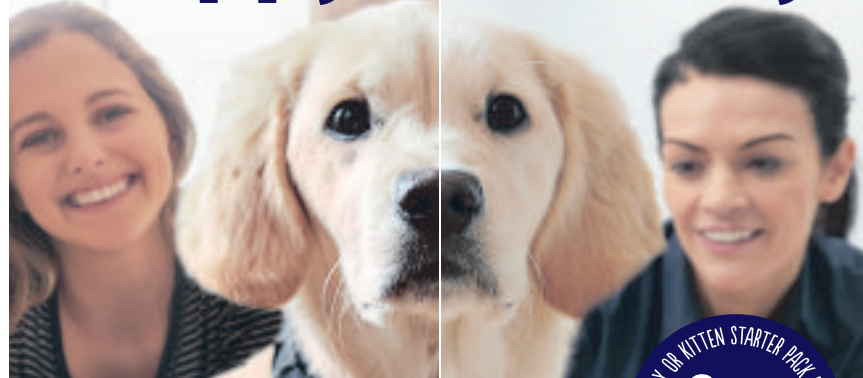
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Join last voyage of 'unsinkable ship'

He started off in Walsall. But theatrical director Thom Southerland has created one of the biggest theatrical productions of the year with Titanic. As a child, the daring and ambitious former pupil of Barr Beacon School used to watch productions at Birmingham's Hippodrome.

And on Monday he'll return to the Hippodrome for a week-long run with Titanic: The Musical, which ends on June 9.

In the final hour of April 14, 1912, the RMS Titanic, on her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York, collided with an iceberg and 'the unsinkable ship' slowly sank. It was one of the most tragic and infamous disasters of the 20th century. A total of 1,517 men, women and children lost their lives.

Based on real people aboard the most legendary ship in the world, Maury Yeston and Peter Stone's stunning musical focuses on their hopes and aspirations. Unaware of the fate that awaits them, the Third Class immigrants dream of a better life in America, the newly-enfranchised Second Class dream of achieving the lifestyles of the rich and famous, and the millionaire Barons of the First Class dream of their mastery lasting forever.

Thom, a former Express & Star paper boy who delivered newspapers to top up his pocket money, explains: "The musical started life in New York. A composer-lyricist had the idea to do a musical retelling of The Titanic – and most people thought that was the worst idea ever. How could we make a musical of one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century?"

"But it is incredible. I heard the score on a CD. It had never been to the UK. The music is not about a ship. It's about the people who were on it."

The musical has been around the world during the past five years, growing each time.

"I can't be more happy than to think this show is touring the UK. It's our story and our legend; so many people that associate with it or are fascinated with it. It's because of the people and the stations and everything that people identify with."

The Hippodrome was where it all began for Thom. He was born in Walsall and went there as a kid to watch pantomimes and musicals. "This is the first time one of my shows will head to the Hippodrome. It wells me up when I think about it. I was born in Walsall, went to Barr Beacon School and we had a teacher, Mr Daniels, who would put on school plays. The teachers would let us act and that encouraged me so much."

He went to the theatre as well, in addition to classes for drama. Since then, his work has gone to America and Japan – but never Birmingham.

"When I was in Walsall, I did acting stuff. Then because I didn't think I was good enough to do that professionally, I desperately wanted to be part of it so I turned to directing."

"I remember going to see a show at the Hippodrome with my grandma and she'd say 'it's beautiful music' and I realised there was more than one way to do it. I went and studied as a director and I've just been very fortunate."

When Thom trained as a director, he was always interested in musical theatre. He wanted to redefine the genre, moving away from big, epic shows to ones where the story was at the heart of things.

"Musicals can get a bad rep



The greatest tragedy – Titanic: The Musical tells the tale

for being cheesy or old fashioned or not as worthy as plays that are in Stratford-upon-Avon. But I said there's no reason why you can't take a musical as seriously as the RSC."

So he started to put on his own shows in very, very small theatres, meeting the bills with his credit card. Instead of shows playing the London Palladium, he took them to 50-seat theatres and asked actors to play their own instruments.

The rest is history and Thom has become a hot property.

"With Titanic, there was these huge sets they tried to replicate what the Titanic looked like. We don't need to see it anymore. So when we see the musical, we see things you don't know. It's all about telling the story. There's no need, like James Cameron did, to make bits up and make fake love affairs up. There was 2,500 people on the ship – you don't have to make it up because those people were all living, breathing human beings who had fascinating stories of their own."

"I always tell the actors when I'm working on it. For half of the show, you

The music is not about a ship. It's about the people who were on it

think you are going to live a new life in a new world. They were aboard the largest moving object in the world, which was also the most glamorous and luxurious. They were experiencing the happiest day of their life.

"Everybody who worked there or who had bought a ticket were thrilled. The Titanic was monumental, the best in the world. They had all achieved."

"And then only four days later, they met their fate in the middle of the north Atlantic, through nobody's fault, in my humble opinion. Our job is to pay tribute to the people who sailed in her and understand what she was supposed to do and supposed to represent. Then to lay testament to the people who sailed in her. It's a disrespect to the people who lost their lives to make up fake love stories."

"Personally, I don't think you can comprehend the hugeness of the tragedy unless you bring it down to a parallel, the experience of one human being. Just as we can't understand the horrors of Nazi Germany but we can understand the diary of Anne Frank."

Andy Richardson

● For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.



The Lady Boys of Bangkok



Oh boy! It's a saucy start to June at the Grand

DREAMBOYS and Lady Boys add up to a memorable series of one-off concerts at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre to get June off to a saucy start.

Joined by celebrity Jake Quickenden (from The X Factor, I'm A Celebrity... and Dancing On Ice), The Dreamboys strut their stuff on Wednesday (June 6).

Then cabaret favourites The Lady Boys of Bangkok bring their glamour to the Grand on June 7 with their Wonder Women Tour. The glitzy show features the Lady Boys' tributes to Cher, Diana Ross, Shirley Bassey, Lady Gaga and Wonder Woman herself.

Before those shows, more traditional old fashioned fun can be seen at the Lichfield Street venue for three performances from Monday to Tuesday in A Grand

Music Hall. Hosted by the Grand's regular panto dame Ian Adams, the variety show features actor Keith Minshull, pianist Guy Rowland, illusionists Van Buren and Allyson, singer Julie Paton and, topping the bill, former Crackerjack and Good Morning Sunday host Don Maclean. There will be prizes for the best 'Good Old Days' costumes.

More nostalgia on Saturday (June 9) when the swing era is recalled with the music of The Glenn Miller Orchestra. The show also features the Moonlight Serenaders, the Swing Time Jivers and the Polka Dots with their tribute to the Andrews Sisters. That will certainly get you 'In The Mood' for some 40s favourites. For more details see grandtheatre.co.uk or call the box office on 01902 429212.

Her heart in Havana – her gig is in Brum



CHART-TOPPING singer Camila Cabello is hitting the road for her first solo tour.

Cabello's Never Be The Same tour follows the immediate success of her self-titled debut album. She will headline Birmingham's O2 on Wednesday (June 6). The Cuban-American singer and songwriter rose to fame as a member of the girl group Fifth Harmony, which was formed during the second season of The X Factor US in 2012. She began to establish herself as a solo artist with the release of several collaborations, including Bad Things with Machine Gun Kelly,

which reached number four on the US Billboard Hot 100.

After leaving Fifth Harmony in December 2016, she released the solo single Crying in the Club. Refocusing her sound to Latin-influenced music, her eponymous debut studio album Camila (2018) entered at number one on the US Billboard 200, supported by its lead single Havana, which topped the charts in several countries, including the UK and the US.

She said the success of Havana was empowering: "I think it really gave me a certain buzz of confidence. When you're a new solo artist, people are kind of

scared to do stuff that's different because they just want to go with what's already being played on the radio. They want to stick to the formula.

"We didn't even release 'Havana' as a single because no one believed in it enough. They were like 'Oh that's a cool song but it's definitely not what you want as a single from your album.' So when it worked, I was like, 'Nobody really knows anything, so you might as well go with what you love.' It was super-validating. It taught me this huge lesson of going with what you feel and you like."

Jane sails in for sell out shows

Singer and TV presenter Jane McDonald will be playing to full houses when she entertains at Birmingham's New Alexander Theatre next Friday (June 8) and returns to the region at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on September 23. She found fame as a cruise ship singer in reality TV show The Cruise and is celebrating 20 years since she first sailed onto our screens. Now the Wakefield warbler is celebrating winning a Bafta for Channel 5 travel show Cruising with Jane McDonald.



It is going to be a hit, man, all over again

Agent 47 is put to the test in HITMAN: Definitive Edition (18), as Danish studio IO Interactive celebrates its 20th anniversary by bringing together the original award-winning video game with all of its previously released content and updates. It also includes new disguises for the stealthy assassin anti-hero which pay tribute to some of their other popular titles. The ICA agent, a Mark Strong look-alike, has exotic locations to choose from in Europe, Africa, America and the Far East as he hones his skills on missions to find and eliminate various targets. Warner Bros have taken on the title, which has a similar feel to their Batman franchise with emphasis on sneaking and surprise. An internet connection is needed as not all the add-ons are pre-loaded on the disc. It is available for Xbox One and PlayStation 4.

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CHOICE



Gareth Southgate

Live International Football (ITV, 5pm)
England v Nigeria (Kick-off 5.15pm). Coverage of the friendly encounter at Wembley Stadium, where both sides continue their preparations for this month's World Cup. England have just this match and one against Costa Rica to play before they fly out to Russia, where they will begin their campaign against Tunisia on June 18th. Gareth Southgate has named a relatively inexperienced squad for the finals, but will be using this fixture to assess his options, while Nigeria also have the World Cup to look forward to, and group fixtures against Argentina, Croatia and Iceland. Mark Pougatch presents, with commentary by Clive Tyldesley and Glenn Hoddle.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** The Hairys Bikers' Asian Adventure. (R) **12.00** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Athletics: Diamond League Rome Highlights. **2.00** Live Challenge Cup Rugby League. Warrington Wolves v Wigan Warriors (Kick-off 2.30pm). **4.35** Escape to the Country. (R) **5.20** Celebrity Mastermind. (R) **5.50** BBC News.
6.00 **Regional Programme.**
6.05 **Film: Shrek 2.** (2004) The grouchy ogre and his new wife Princess Fiona set out on a journey to meet her parents. However, the king and queen are less than impressed with their daughter's choice of husband, while a conniving fairy godmother is determined to make sure her own son gets to marry the princess. Animated adventure sequel, with the voices of Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz, Eddie Murphy, Antonio Banderas, John Cleese, Julie Andrews, Jennifer Saunders and Rupert Everett.
7.30 **Pointless Celebrities.** Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present a Radio 2-themed edition, with contestants including Jo Whaley, Jeremy Vine, Zoe Ball, Michael Ball and Ken Bruce. (R)
8.20 **Casualty.** Alicia struggles to process the events of her night with Eddie, and collapses after refusing to take a break. Just as she starts to tell Ethan about her problems, Elle interrupts.
9.10 **All Round to Mrs Brown's.** Mrs Brown's Boys creator, writer and star Brendan O'Carroll dons Agnes's famous cardigan and curlers once again, throwing open the doors of the larger-than-life Irish matriarch's home to host the Saturday night chat show, filmed in front of a live studio audience. Joining in the fun this time around are musical duo Sting & Shaggy, This Morning's resident chef and star of Celebrity Juice Gino D'Acampo, Loose Women presenter Christine Lampard, and Dragons' Den stalwarts Peter Jones and Deborah Meaden.
10.10 BBC News: Weather.; National Lottery Update.
10.30 Film: Meet the Fockers. (2004) Comedy sequel, with Ben Stiller and Robert De Niro.
12.20 The Button. (R) **12.50** Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.55** BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 David Attenborough's Natural Curiosities. (R) **6.40** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. **7.05** The Pets Factor. **7.30** The Dingles. **8.00** Absolute Genius Super Tech with Dick & Dom. **8.30** Beyond Bionic. **9.00** Steve Backshall v the Monster Mountain. (R) **10.00** Astronauts: Do You Have What It Takes? (R) **11.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **12.00** SAS: Rogue Warriors. (R) **1.00** The World According to Kids. (R) **2.00** Money for Nothing. (R) **2.30** Second Chance Summer: Tuscany. (R) **3.30** Love in the Countryside. (R) **4.30** Flog It! (R) **5.20** Grammar Schools: Who Will Get In? (R)
6.20 **The Forest.** The Galloway Hills Rally draws crowds of visitors to the park, while tree planter Alastair Livingstone restocks a recently felled site with sycamore and oak. (R)
6.50 **Dad's Army.** Walmington-on-Sea leaves its mark on a visiting French general when the platoon repaints Lady Matlby's Rolls-Royce just in time for an official engagement. (R)
7.20 **Film: Ladies in Lavender.** (2004) The lives of two elderly spinster sisters are thrown into turmoil when a handsome Polish castaway washes up on the shore by their Cornish home and reawakens long-dormant yearnings and memories. Period drama directed by Charles Dance, starring Judi Dench, Maggie Smith, Daniel Bruhl, Miriam Margolyes, Natascha McElhone and Freddie Jones.
9.00 **Nothing Like a Dame.** Eileen Atkins, Judi Dench, Joan Plowright and Maggie Smith let the cameras in on a friendship that goes back more than half a century. Coming together for a weekend at the country retreat Dame Joan once shared with her husband Laurence Olivier, the acting greats discuss their lives and careers, reminisce about their humble beginnings in the theatre, and reflect on love and loss.
10.30 **All Girls Live at the Apollo.** A female-only special of the comedy show in which leading performers from the stand-up circuit entertain a packed house at London's Hammersmith Apollo.
11.15 **Later Weekend with Jools Holland.**
12.15 **Film:** Quartet. (2012) **1.45** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITY: Sooty. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.30** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Super 4. (R) **6.55** The Oddbods Show. (R) **7.05** Star Wars Freemaker Adventures. (R) **7.30** Teen Titans Go! (R) **7.45** Adventure Time. (R) **7.55** Drop Dead Weird. **8.25** ITV News. **8.30** Zoe Ball On Saturday. **9.25** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.20** Who's Doing the Dishes? (R) **12.15** ITV News: Weather. **12.30** Little Big Shots. (R) **1.30** ITV Racing Live: The Derby. Including coverage of the 4.30 Investec Derby. **5.00** Live International Football. England v Nigeria (Kick-off 5.15pm).
7.30 **ITV News:** Weather.
7.45 **Regional Programme;** Weather.
8.00 **The British Soap Awards 2018.** Phillip Schofield presents coverage of the event from London's Hackney Empire, featuring awards including Best Actor, Best Actress, Villain of the Year, Best Comedy Performance, Best Newcomer, Best Single Episode and Best Storyline. The Outstanding Achievement award will be presented to a long-standing member of the soap community, while one of Coronation Street, Doctors, EastEnders, Emmerdale and Hollyoaks will take home the coveted Best British Soap gong.
10.05 **ITV News;** Weather.
10.20 **International Football Highlights.** England v Nigeria. The key moments from the friendly international at Wembley Stadium, which was a vital one for Gareth Southgate's men in preparation for the World Cup.
11.15 **Film: Rocky.** (1976) A struggling boxer gets an unexpected shot at taking on the heavyweight champion of the world. Oscar-winning drama, starring Sylvester Stallone, Burgess Meredith and Carl Weathers.
1.30 **Jackpot247.** Viewers get the chance to participate in live interactive gaming from the comfort of their sofas, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.00** Mr Selfridge. Harry pushes ahead with plans for the Selfridge Estate, aiming to buy a field at auction, but an unexpected rival bidder poses a threat. Miss Mardie makes her mark in fashion. (R) **3.50** **ITV** Nightscreen. Text-based information service.

CHANNEL 4

6.00 Mobil 1: The Grid. **6.30** Motor Sport: British GT. **7.25** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.50** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.20** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.50** Frasier. (R) **9.20** Frasier. (R) **9.50** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.20** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.50** The Simpsons. (R) **11.20** The Simpsons. (R) **11.45** Come Dine with Me. (R) **12.50** Four in a Bed. (R) **1.20** Four in a Bed. (R) **1.55** Four in a Bed. (R) **2.25** Four in a Bed. (R) **2.55** Four in a Bed. (R) **3.25** A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun. (R) **4.30** Kirstie and Phil's Love It or List It. (R) **5.30** The Secret Life of the Zoo. (R)
6.30 **Channel 4 News.**
7.00 **Film: Iron Man 2.** (2010) Tycoon-turned-superhero Tony Stark confronts a fearsome new foe in a Russian scientist using his own deadly hi-tech weapons to seek revenge. He also faces a struggle to keep his secrets out of the hands of both the government and an amoral rival, and discovers the armour he developed to fight evil is slowly killing him. Action adventure sequel, with Robert Downey Jr and Don Cheadle.
9.20 **Live International Rugby Union.** South Africa v Wales (Kick-off 10.00pm). Lee McKenzie presents coverage of the international fixture, staged at the RFK Stadium in Washington, DC. Wales move on to South America following this match for a two-test tour of Argentina, and will be looking to improve on their recent record against the Springboks. With analysis from Ryan Jones, Ugo Monye and Thinus Delport, and reports from Sam Warburton, Alun Wyn Jones, Ken Owens and Jonathan Davies.
12.15 **Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA.** Part two of two. Gordon Ramsay gives the owners of La Galleria 33 an ultimatum. (R) **1.05** Hollyoaks. Omnibus. Ste is furious to learn that Leah has sold a story to a gossip magazine, while an old face turns up in the village making financial demands. (R) **3.20** Building the Dream. Charlie Luxton heads to Cornwall to help serial renovators Neil and Suzie with a contemporary build that is not just set to be very grand, but Suzie wants it finished by Christmas. (R) **4.15** My Kitchen Rules. Harrogate best friends Anna and Faye open a health-conscious restaurant. (R) **5.10** Jamie's Comfort Food. Genaro Contaldo helps Jamie Oliver make bolognese ravioli. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.15** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.50** Cats Make You Laugh Out Loud 2. (R) **11.15** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.05** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.05** Police Interceptors. (R) **2.05** Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords. (R) **3.05** Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords. (R) **4.05** Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords. (R) **5.05** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away! (R)
6.05 **Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away!** Sheriff Paul Bohill tackles the case of a small debt owed by ex-footballer Neil Ruddock, before being forced to evict a school dinner lady in south London. (R)
6.55 **5 News Weekend.**
7.00 **Cricknet on 5.** England v Pakistan. Action from the second day of the Second Test in the two-match series, which took place at Emerald Headingley Stadium. Commentary and analysis is provided by Michael Vaughan, Mark Nicholas, Geoff Boycott, Alison Mitchell, Sourav Ganguly and Charles Dagnall.
8.00 **Queen Victoria and Her Tragic Family.** The series concludes with a look at the queen's efforts to control her children's personal lives, arranging a marriage for Princess Louise to a gay Scottish lord and refusing to let Prince Leopold to pursue an education at Oxford owing to his ill health – which he had already passed on to his children. The programme also examines how Princess Beatrice got married against her mother's will and the arrival of Indian servant Abdul Karim in the royal household. Last in the series.
9.00 **Elizabeth I: Death of a Dynasty.** The drama-documentary examines the Tudor queen's rousing speech at Tilbury, her decline into old age, and the Earl of Essex's betrayal. Last in the series. (R)
10.00 **Agatha Christie's Crooked House.** Adaptation of the mystery novel, starring Max Irons and Terence Stamp. A man returning to London from Cairo investigates the poisoning of his fiancée's grandfather. (R)
11.05 **5 News Update.**
11.10 **Agatha Christie's Crooked House.** Adaptation of the mystery novel, starring Max Irons. (R)
12.15 SuperCasino. **3.10** **Film:** The Cabin in the Woods. (2012)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 The Burrowers: Animals Underground **8.00** Patagonia: Earth's Secret Paradise **9.00** Inspector Montalbano **10.50** Sicily: Wonder of the Mediterranean **11.50** Top of the Pops: 1985 **12.50** Kate Bush at the BBC **1.50** Hot Chocolate at the BBC **2.50** How to Get Ahead: At Renaissance Court **3.50** Close
ITV2
11.05 Britain's Got Talent **12.40** Britain's Got Talent Results **1.05** Ninja Warrior UK **2.10** You've Been Framed! Gold **3.10** **Film:** Red Riding Hood (2011) **4.10** **Film:** Red Riding Hood (2011) **5.20** **Film:** The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (2014) **6.25** **FYI** Daily **6.30** **Film:** The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (2014) **8.00** **Film:** The Amazing Spider-Man (2012) **9.05** **FYI** Daily **9.10** **10.40** Family Guy **12.25** American Dad! **1.40** CelebAbility **2.20** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.45** Teleshopping **5.45** **ITV2** Nightscreen
ITV3
2.45 **Film:** Columbo: By Dawn's Early Light (1974) **4.50** **Levis** **7.00** **Endeavour** **11.00** **A Touch of Frost** **1.15** **On the Buses** **2.10** **ITV3** Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping
ITV4
9.00 **Isle of Man TT** **10.00** **Film:** Platoon (1986) **11.10** **FYI** Daily **11.15** **Film:** Platoon (1986) **12.25** **Film:** This Is the End (2013) **1.30** **FYI** Daily **1.35** **Film:** This Is the End (2013) **2.35** **Football Rivalries** **2.50** **ITV4** Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping
E4
11.00 **The Goldbergs** **1.00** **Brooklyn Nine-Nine** **1.30** **Young Sheldon** **1.55** **Film:** The Core (2003) **4.30** **The Big Bang Theory** **9.00** **Film:** Speed (1994) **11.20** **Gogglebox** **1.25** **Tattoo Fixers** on Holiday **2.30** **Rude Tube** **3.25** **Gogglebox** **4.15** **Rude(ish)** **Tube** **4.40** **How I Met Your Mother**
Film4
11.00 **Rugrats** in Paris: The Movie (2000) **1.00** **Epic** (2013) **3.05** **Dr Seuss' The Lorax** (2012) **4.45** **Dr Dolittle 2** (2001) **6.35** **Beautiful Creatures** (2013) **9.00** **The Other Woman** (2014) A woman discovers her boyfriend is married, and joins forces with his wife and a third lover to get revenge. Comedy, starring Cameron Diaz, Leslie Mann and Kate Upton. **11.10** **The Grassy Strangler** (2016) **Premiere.** Comedy horror, starring Michael St Michaels. **1.00** **The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2** (1986) **3.10** **Close**



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CHOICE



Frankie Boyle

Frankie Goes to Russia (BBC2, 9pm)

Part one of two. Frankie Boyle explores Russia in advance of the World Cup, looking at what lies behind national stereotypes and exploring the country's football culture. In the first episode, he visits the seaside town hosting the England team and a city renowned for football-related violence. He also joins a daredevil motorbike football team, records a world cup rap, and meets the sabre-wielding Cossacks policing the World Cup stadiums.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **12.00** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News. Weather. **1.15** Garden Rescue. (R) **2.00** Money for Nothing. (R) **3.00** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.00** Points of View. **4.15** Songs of Praise. **4.50** Britain's Best Home Cook. (R) **5.50** Pointless Celebrities. (R)

6.35 BBC News.**6.50 Regional Programme.**

7.00 **Countryfile.** A special episode from the royal family's Balmoral estate. Matt Baker visits Glamis castle, ancestral seat of the Queen Mother, while Ellie Harrison explores Ballochbuie Forest and goes in search of wood grouse and a royal stag.

8.00 **Antiques Roadshow.** The roving team values more decorative objects and rarities belonging to the public.

9.00 **A Very English Scandal.** Hugh Grant and Ben Whishaw star in the conclusion of Russell T Davies' drama based on the true story of the downfall of political leader Jeremy Thorpe. Norman survives a bungled attempt on his life, and publicly accuses Jeremy of having hired the would-be killer to silence him – an act which finally brings their secret relationship into the public eye for the first time. With the world watching, the ensuing court case drags years of acrimony between the two men into the light, as a man who would be prime minister stands trial for conspiracy to murder. Last in the series.

10.00 BBC News.**10.20 Regional Programme.**

10.30 **Imagine – Margaret Atwood: You Have Been Warned!** Alan Yentob meets the Canadian author in Toronto to discover how a childhood spent between the wilderness and the city helped shape her vision of herself and the world. (R)

11.35 **Film: Up in the Air.** (2009) A corporate downsizing expert finds his emotionally detached lifestyle under threat from an executive with revolutionary ideas. Comedy drama, with George Clooney and Vera Farmiga.

1.15 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.20** BBC News.

BBC2

6.20 Glorious Gardens from Above. (R) **7.05** Gardeners' World. (R) **8.05** Countryfile. (R) **9.00** The Beechgrove Garden. **9.30** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.00** Spring Kitchen with Tom Kerridge. (R) **11.45** Hairy Bikers' Best of British. (R) **12.45** Wanted Down Under. (R) **1.30** Live Rowing World Cup. **3.00** Live Challenge Cup Rugby League. **5.30** Flog It! (R)

6.00 **Dragons' Den.** More entrepreneurs present their money-making ideas to the panelists, including pitches for natural raw dog food, a date-based smoothie and a free-running exercise regimen. (R)

7.00 **Million Pound Menu.** Fred Sirieix presents the fine dining challenge which follows people who work in the food business as they seek major investment to launch their own restaurants. (R)

8.00 **Journey in the Danger Zone: Iraq.** Part one of two. Former soldier Adnan Sarwar explores the country to see how it has changed since he was last there as part of the occupying force in 2003.

9.00 **Frankie Goes to Russia.** Part one of two. Frankie Boyle explores Russia in advance of the World Cup, beginning with a visit to the seaside town hosting the England team and a city renowned for violence.

10.00 **Atlanta.** A rival rapper steals the spotlight from Paper Boi at a charity basketball event, and Earn spots a chance to raise his professional profile when he is mistaken for someone else.

10.20 **Atlanta.** Van is irritated by her successful old friend Jayde, but the pair find a way to put aside their differences while smoking weed – until Van remembers she is due a drug test at work.

10.45 **Live at the Apollo.** Glaswegian comedian Frankie Boyle takes to the stage at London's Hammersmith Apollo, and introduces rising stars Jack Carroll and Holly Walsh. (R)

11.15 **Film: The Spectacular Now.** (2013) A teenage loner bonds with a drunken classmate who helps her create a new persona for herself to boost her confidence. Drama, starring Miles Teller.

12.45 Sign Zone: Question Time. (R) **1.45** Holby City. (R) **2.45** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.30** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Super 4. (R) **6.55** The Oddbods Show. (R) **7.05** Star Wars Freemaker Adventures. (R) **7.30** Teen Titans Go! (R) **7.45** Adventure Time. (R) **7.55** Drop Dead Weird. **8.25** ITV News. **8.30** Zoe Ball On Sunday. **9.25** Countrywise: Secret Wild Places. (R) **10.25** Film: Casino Royale. (1967) **1.00** ITV News: Weather. **1.10** Film: St. Trinian's. (2007) Comedy, starring Rupert Everett. **3.00** Tenable. (R) **4.00** Tipping Point: Lucky Stars. (R) **5.00** Celebrity Catchphrase. (R)

6.00 **ITV News: Weather.****6.15** **Regional Programme; Weather.**

6.30 **The Chase: Celebrity Special.** Bradley Walsh presents as Westlife's Nicky Byrne, Olympian Amy Williams, Natalie Cassidy (EastEnders) Sonia Jackson) and Dave Myers of The Hairy Bikers pit their wits against ruthless quiz genius the Chaser in the hope of winning a potential prize pot worth thousands of pounds. They must work as a team and play strategically to answer general knowledge questions against the clock and race down the game board to the exit without being caught. (R)

7.30 **Britain's Got Talent Final.** Declan Donnelly hosts the live final of the nationwide talent search as the 12th series draws to a climax. A wide variety of acts have stepped in front of judges Simon Cowell, Amanda Holden, Alesha Dixon and David Walliams eager to impress, and tonight the last remaining contestants will be putting in one last performance to earn the votes of the viewing public and get the chance to be crowned champion, win £250,000 and take to the stage in a coveted slot at this year's Royal Variety Performance. Last in the series.

10.05 **ITV News: Weather.**

10.20 **Les Dawson Forever.** A tribute to the life and career of the TV comedy star, with contributions by Barry Cryer, Rick Wakeman, Johnny Vegas, Lorraine Chase, Les's widow Tracy, and his daughter Tracy. (R)

12.10 Great Art. (R) **1.05** Jackpot247. **3.00** Motorsport UK. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.10 The King of Queens. (R) **6.35** Motor Sport: FIA World Rallycross Championship. **7.30** Eat the Week. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Bake Off: The Professionals. (R) **1.30** The Simpsons. (R) **1.55** The Simpsons. (R) **2.25** The Simpsons. (R) **2.55** Film: Eragon. (2006) Fantasy adventure, starring Ed Speleers. **5.00** Film: Johnny English. (2003) Spy comedy, starring Rowan Atkinson.

6.35 **Channel 4 News.**

7.00 **Escape to the Chateau.** Dick gets to work on the walled garden in the spring and buys a mini tractor for the job – but it may not fit through the gate. Angel designs another suite, with black walls and mosaic mirrors, and decorates the entire dining room with blossoms so a guest can make a special wedding proposal. The couple also consider the possibility of truffle farming. (R)

8.00 **Bake Off: The Professionals.** Liam Charles and Tom Allen present the halfway point of the patisserie contest, with the five remaining teams being challenged to prepare 24 opera slices and 24 exotic fruit roulades, before putting a modern spin on classic French pastry the religieuse. Judges Cherish Finden and Benoit Blin will then decide which duo is not going through to the next round.

9.00 **The Handmaid's Tale.** Offred reflects on her relationship with her mother as she navigates her way through Gilead. In Little America, Moira tries to cope with the trauma she endured.

10.15 **8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown.** Jimmy Carr hosts the words-and-numbers panel game, with Sean Lock joined by Johnny Vegas, and special guest captain Sarah Millican joining forces with Rob Beckett. (R)

11.15 **Naked Attraction.** Dating show hosted by Anna Richardson in which two singletons choose a date from a selection of six naked people, who will be revealed to them one body part at a time. (R)

12.15 **Film: The Other Boleyn Girl.** (2008) Historical drama, starring Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson. **2.10** Building the Dream. (R) **3.05** My Kitchen Rules. (R) **4.00** Gillette World Sport. **4.25** Mobil 1: The Grid. (R) **4.50** Food Unwrapped. (R) **5.10** Fifteen to One. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.10** Wissper. (R) **6.20** Poppy Cat. (R) **6.30** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.35** The Secret Life of Puppies. (R) **6.40** Moly. (R) **6.45** Simon. (R) **6.50** Only the Little White Van. (R) **7.00** Peppa Pig. (R) **7.05** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.15** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.30** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.45** Rusty Rivets. **8.00** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.15** Nella the Princess Knight. (R) **8.30** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **8.50** Floogals. (R) **9.00** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.10** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.30** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.45** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.55** Peppa Pig. (R) **10.00** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.35** Access. **10.40** Police Interceptors. (R) **11.30** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.20** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.20** Naughty Toddlers Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **2.20** Naughty Cats Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **3.20** Disobedient Dogs Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **4.20** Most Shocking Talent Show Moments. (R)

7.00 **Cricket on 5.** England v Pakistan.

Action from the third day of the Second Test in the two-match series.

7.55 **5 News Weekend.**

8.00 **The Unstoppable Flying Scotsman.** During its lifetime, the Flying Scotsman has broken records, travelled the world, starred in a movie and even bankrupted its owners. Engineer Rob Bell presents the first of a two-part documentary charting the history of the world's most famous steam locomotive, looking at why has it inspired such affection among steam fans and still attracts huge crowds wherever it goes. (R)

9.00 **The Flying Scotsman: A Legend Reborn.** Part two of two. Rob Bell reveals how enthusiast Alan Pegler saved the locomotive when British Railways announced plans to scrap it in 1962. (R)

10.00 **Top of the Box 95: TV's Most Controversial Year.** The 20 highest rated TV shows of 1995, including One Foot in the Grave, Father Ted, Shooting Stars, Peak Practice, Brookside, and Martin Bashir's interview with Princess Diana.

11.55 **Best of Bad TV: The 00s.** TV gaffes of the 2000s, a decade that saw Gary Barlow trying to act, Edwina Currie performing a Wife Swap with John McCrick and someone taking a night pop at Danny Dyer. (R)

1.15 SuperCasino. **3.10** Traffic Cops. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Locomotion: Dan Snow's History of Railways **8.00** How to Build Britain's Secret Engineers **9.00** Normandy '44: The Battle Beyond D-Day **10.00** The Jeremy Thorpe Scandal **11.00** Amazon Abyss **12.00** Civilisations Stories: The Empire **12.30** Locomotion: Dan Snow's History of Railways **1.30** How to Build Britain's Secret Engineers **2.30** Return to Larkinland **3.30** Close

ITV2

11.45 **Film: The Flintstones** (1994) **12.50** FYI Daily **12.55** **Film: The Flintstones** (1994) **1.30** **Film: Planet 51** (2009) **2.35** FYI Daily **2.40** **Film: Planet 51** (2009) **3.25** **Film: Spy Kids 2: Island of Lost Dreams** (2002) **4.25** FYI Daily **4.30** **Film: Spy Kids 2: Island of Lost Dreams** (2002) **5.30** **Film: Despicable Me 2** (2013) **6.30** FYI Daily **6.35** **Film: Despicable Me 2** (2013) **7.30** **Film: Battleship** (2012) **8.30** FYI Daily **8.35** **Film: Battleship** (2012) **10.05** Britain's Got Most Talent Live **11.05** Family Guy **1.00** American Dad! **1.55** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.25** Teleshopping **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3

11.05 **Film: The Likely Lads** (1976) **12.50** **Film: Rising Damp** (1980) **2.50** A Touch of Frost **4.50** Endeavour **7.00** Vera **9.00** Unforgotten **11.20** Wire in the Blood **1.00** Blue Murder **2.20** Liverpool **1.30** Road to Avonlea **5.05** George and Mildred **5.30** ITV3 Nightscreen

ITV4

9.00 Isle of Man TT **11.00** Cycling: Critérium du Dauphiné Highlights **11.00** World Rugby U20 Championship Highlights **12.00** BRDC Formula 3 Highlights **1.00** Fifth Gear **2.00** Ax Men **3.00** Teleshopping

E4

12.25 Brooklyn Nine-Nine **12.55** Young Sheldon **1.25** The Big Bang Theory **6.15** **Film: The Hunger Games** (2012) **9.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **10.00** Gogglebox **11.00** Gogglebox Australia **12.05** The Big Bang Theory **1.00** Tattoo Fixers on Holiday **2.10** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **3.00** Gogglebox Australia **3.50** Hollyoaks

Film4

11.00 Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days (2012) **1.00** Ponyo (2008) **3.05** Tooth Fairy (2010) **5.10** Carry On Nurse (1959) **6.50** The Secret Life of Walter Mitty (2013) **9.00** Last Vegas (2013) Comedy, starring Michael Douglas. **11.05** Prometheus (2012) Sci-Fi thriller, starring Noomi Rapace. **1.30** The Paperboy (2012) **3.45** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

Killer in Paradise, Channel 5, 3.20pm

While on a dream vacation with her husband, a woman becomes a target after she starts to suspect one of the island's locals may have committed multiple murders. Thriller, starring Jackie Moore, Barbie Castro, Brian Gross, Jordi Vilasuso, Brian Patrick Clarke and Jacq King. (2018)

TUESDAY

Escaping Evil: Saving My Children, Channel 5, 3.15pm

Erin believes that she has left her Mob ties behind after being placed in a witness protection programme. However, the man she thought she had killed turns up under an assumed identity and bent on revenge, meaning she must protect her new life and her family. Thriller, starring Mia Kirshner and Paul McGillion. (2014)

WEDNESDAY

Seduced by a Stranger, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A single mother's life is turned upside down when an international conman Martin to her neighbourhood. Thriller, starring Chandra West, Steve Bacic and Kate Sproule. (2017)



Bend It Like Beckham, Friday, ITV, 10.45pm

THURSDAY

Girlfriend Killer, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A businesswoman who creates the perfect marriage proposals for wealthy men, becomes the target of a crazy client's obsession when she shows him compassion after his girlfriend publicly rejects him. Thriller, starring Dina Meyer, Corin Nemec and Barbie Castro. (2017)

FRIDAY

Bend It Like Beckham, ITV, 10.45pm

An English schoolgirl tries to hide her passion for football from her strict Indian parents, knowing they disapprove of her tomboyish love of the game. However, when a semi-professional player sees her in action, she is offered a place on a team, forcing her to come up with a complex plan to keep her sporting career under wraps. Comedy, with Parminder Nagra, Keira Knightley, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Juliet Stevenson and Shaznay Lewis. (2002)

Acclaimed drama makes a welcome return to the screen

Following a successful six-part first series, the acclaimed school drama, returns.

Set in a fictional Yorkshire mill town, Ackley Bridge follows the trials and tribulations at a new academy made up from two formerly isolated comprehensives – one predominantly white and the other Asian.

Predictably, the educational experiment in multiculturalism hasn't always gone to plan, and neighbours and best friends soon found themselves on different sides of a racial divide.

"Do they think they can keep us quiet with a lick of paint and some cr*p about learning to live together?" the show's most entertaining if not likeable character Jordan memorably asked, after breaking into the school office.

As well as the whole education integration topic, there were plenty of other weighty topics covered in Ackley Bridge's first season.

Dubbed the new Waterloo Road and also drawing comparisons to

Shameless when it first aired, it got off to a bang with a girl posting a nude selfie of her mother online, while other subjects tackles included religious prejudice, bullying and a major death.

The second series gets under way tonight as, in a bid to disguise her sexuality, Nas (Amy-Leigh Hickman) agrees to a sham engagement with Naveed (Gurjeet Singh) – who is also in the closet.

However, as she reels from the discovery of a family secret, Nas struggles to continue the lie and emotions run high at the family engagement dinner.

Headmistress Mandy (Jo Joyner) is still under pressure from wealthy school sponsor and Head of Academy Trust, Sadiq (Adil Ray).

Both the Year 7 intake and exam results have plummeted, forcing her to instigate a strict academic regime that causes uproar among staff and students alike.

English teacher Emma (Liz White) and Mandy's friendship is tested when they clash over the decision

and Emma allows the students to protest.

Emma also has affairs of the heart to deal with, and on the day of Sami's (Arsher Ali) wedding, she struggles to hide her feelings for him.

Finally, Missy (Poppy Lee Friar) and Nas cause trouble for Jordan when they steal his drugs money. Will the cocky lad finally get his comeuppance?

Joining the cast for this new series is Kimberly Walsh.

The Girls Aloud singer, who has had small roles in Disney series The Lodge and Horrid Henry: The Movie, plays home-wrecking netball teacher Claire, who is also the ex-wife of Paul Nicholls' character Steve.

Walsh said: "It was so much fun appearing as Claire. It's a fantastic show with a brilliant cast. It was an honour to be part of it.

"Claire is quite different to other characters I've played in the past. She is sassy and strong and comes to blows a few times with Mandy, which was really fun to play."



Ackley Bridge, Wednesday, Channel 4, 8pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Versailles

BBC2, 9pm

New series. Louis celebrates France's victory over the Protestant Dutch and their allies by welcoming Leopold of Hungary and his niece Eleanor to Versailles, but the defeated emperor's own ambitions could have personal consequences for the French king. Madame de Montespan finds a way to hurt a former friend in the king's prim companion Francois de Maintenon, while Philippe returns a war hero, accompanied by his brother-in-arms Guillaume, who is rewarded by the King for his bravery in battle.

TUESDAY

Our Girl

BBC1, 9pm

It's a busy week for Michelle Keegan – on Wednesday she kicks off a new run of Who Do You Think You Are?, but first she's back as Lance Corporal Georgie Lane in the latest run of the military drama. As the series begins, Georgie is still heartbroken over the death of Elvis Harte. She copes by throwing herself into her job – which in this series involves 2 Section heading to Nigeria as part of the British Army's efforts to help train local forces in the fight against terror. However, both the Brits and the Nigerian Army are put on edge when

they encounter a local crime boss and a band of mercenaries in a village near the site where a group of school girls were abducted. 2 Section step in to help the local authorities track down the girls, but Georgie unwittingly places herself and her comrades in danger.

WEDNESDAY

Great Rail Restorations with Peter Snow

Channel 4, 8pm

New series. Peter Snow and Henry Cole visit projects across the country where teams of restoration experts are attempting to restore historic railway carriages to their former glory. The first stop is the stunning Vale of Llangollen in North Wales, to visit a 1912 carriage designed by Sir Nigel Gresley, the creator of the Flying Scotsman, where Henry explores how the emergency cord was invented and learns how rail travellers coped before toilets were introduced on trains.

Grenfell: The First 24 Hours

ITV, 9pm

In the early hours of June 14, 2017, a blaze broke out at Grenfell Tower in west London, claiming 72

lives and injuring many others. ITV is marking the approach of the appalling tragedy's first anniversary with this moving documentary in which survivors recall the events of that terrible night, one that rocked not only the local community, but the entire country. The programme charts exactly what happened, from the first report of the fire to the London Fire Brigade getting it under control 24 hours later. Among those featured are residents Clarita Ghavini, who was found by a neighbour, and Sammy Wordy, who remains haunted by the screams of a woman trapped inside. There's also testimony from a firefighter who rescued nine people that night.

THURSDAY

Supershoppers

Channel 4, 8pm

New series. The consumer advice show returns with Anna Richardson and Sabrina Grant providing the lowdown on

favourite brands and retailers, as well as tips on how to get the best deals. They begin with a look at retail giant John Lewis, investigating whether its famous price promise can always be trusted. There is also an undercover report from a major UK high-street chain catching sales staff giving shoppers suspect advice. Plus, reports on what goes into dairy-free milk drinks, supermarket value brands and which batteries last the longest.

FRIDAY

Cruising with Jane McDonald

Channel 5, 9pm

For some people, this entertaining travelogue used to be something of a guilty pleasure, but now it's won a Bafta (the first in Channel 5's history), there's no need to hide your love of Jane McDonald any longer. And for newcomers who are wondering what all the fuss is about, this two-part special is the perfect place to start. It finds Jane exploring Australia and New Zealand, beginning with an open-top bus tour of Sydney and a trip to the Opera House, where she finds herself centre stage. Then it's on to Tasmania, where the presenter meets the staff and furry inhabitants of a wildlife sanctuary, before she heads to New Zealand and Milford Sound, which lives up to its billing as the wettest place on Earth.



Our Girl, Tuesday, BBC1, 9pm

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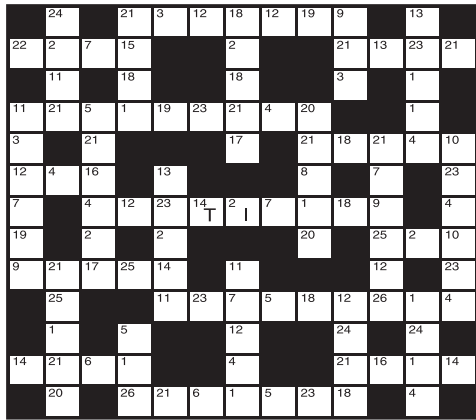


BRAIN GYM

No.482

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
D	E	M	O	A	X	F	H	R	J	T	P	V	I	L	Q	Z	W	S	C	B	G	U	N	K	Y

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

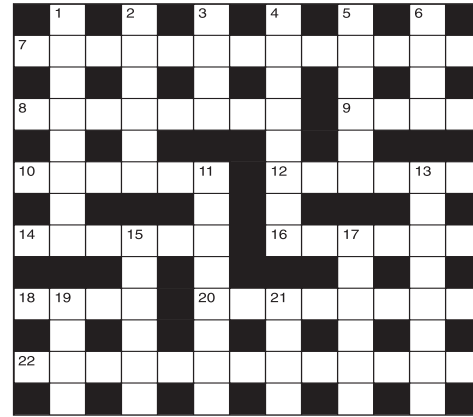
Across

7. Marksmen who have meteoric careers? (8,5)
8. Insect with a lot to learn (8)
9. Where to put money to work (4)
10. Stays to give personal support (6)
12. Do real results come from such a testing experience? (6)
14. A wild horse on land (6)
16. Eagerly Len rummaged about in the locker (6)
18. Yet she may be a hit with the boys (4)
20. It's rash returning yet has some worth inside (8)
22. It offers protection to buyer and seller alike (7,6)

Down

1. Find her with nothing on in beds, smoking them? (8)
2. They don't like gooseberries (6)
3. It's not evident the plaintiff has a quarrel (4)
4. Not a pretty sight on the face of things (4,4)
5. Tasted differently, it's said (6)
6. A test for which there is something to be said (4)
11. What scores of young people are in? (8)
13. Hub-hub (4-4)
15. Love duets freshly turned out (6)
17. Slips in proofs of humanity? (6)
19. A club with lofty aims (4)
21. This reminds me to go to the doctor (4)

1	14	T
2	15	I
3	16	
4	17	
5	18	
6	19	
7	20	
8	21	
9	22	
10	23	
11	24	
12	25	
13	26	



Quick Clues:

Across

7. Scrupulous (13)
8. Valuer (8)
9. Portent (4)
10. Acrid (6)
12. Character (6)
14. Fault (6)
16. Mystery (6)
18. Close (4)
20. Amicable (8)
22. Dull (13)

Down

1. Plot (8)
2. Aver (6)
3. Mental powers (4)
4. Gate (8)
5. Equip (3,3)
6. Entice (4)
11. Confirmed (8)
13. Disconnected (8)
15. Scope (6)
17. Catch fire (6)
19. Suspend (4)
21. Notion (4)

Sudoku

	7			4			1	
			7		2	9	5	
9	5	4			8			3
2			6	5				
	6					3	2	
		8		9	3			1
8			3			4	9	5
		7	9					
9			1				8	

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

9	2	1	7	5	8	4	3	6
6	8	3	4	9	2	5	7	1
5	7	4	6	1	3	9	8	2
7	5	8	3	2	9	1	6	4
3	6	2	1	4	7	8	5	9
4	1	9	8	6	5	7	2	3
2	3	5	9	7	1	6	4	8
1	4	7	2	8	6	3	9	5
8	9	6	5	3	4	2	1	7

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Ebbs; 8 The marines; 9 Playmate; 10 Sofa; 12 Moment; 14 Tremor; 15 Stream; 17 Castle; 18 Eric; 19 Tent-pegs; 21 Elasticity; 22 Sash. Down: 2 Bill-poster; 3 Stay; 4 Repeat; 5 Talent; 6 Minsters; 7 Asia; 11 Footlights; 13 Exercise; 16 Metric; 17 Candid; 18 Ewer; 20 Pays.
QUICK - Across: 1 Feel; 8 Answer back; 9 Ladybird; 10 East; 12 Marine; 14 Devise; 15 Middle; 17 Sudden; 18 Snag; 19 Browbeat; 21 Mountebank; 22 Ekes. Down: 2 Excavation; 3 Lady; 4 Aspire; 5 Headed; 6 Observed; 7 Skit; 11 Sustainance; 13 Indigent; 16 Emblem; 17 Slogan; 18 Same; 20 Bake.

Quiz

1. Who became South Africa's first executive state president in 1984?
2. Which increasingly-common medical condition is treated with a bronchodilator?
3. From which flower is orrisroot obtained?
4. Of which bird is the ptarmigan a variety?
5. Who is the Greek counterpart of the Roman goddess Pax?
6. Which school featured in a series of films by Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat?
7. Who founded the Society of Friends?
8. When was the Domesday Book completed?
9. To which church do the Moonies belong?
10. Which choirboy had a hit with Walking In The Air?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Santiago; 2 Greenpeace; 3 L Ron Hubbard; 4 England and Scotland; 5 John Grisham; 6 Lockjaw; 7 Ottorino Respighi; 8 Cyclades; 9 Elaine Paige; 10 Graham Greene.
Niner: UNLATCHED

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

4563123
956167
274567823

gives a sorcerer,
gives a second sorcerer,
gives a third sorcerer.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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Star quality Ivy really grows on you

LAVISH doesn't come close. The new 155-seat, three-floor, The Ivy restaurant at Birmingham's Temple Row, which opened in April, is the acme of style.

Created by the group behind the world-famous celebrity haunt of the same name in London, it's been the most eagerly-anticipated restaurant opening in the Second City this year.

Leather banquettes in a dreamy shade of burnt orange mix with plenty of green palates and stunning Art Deco glass, lights and artwork to create a venue that's part-restaurant, part-art-installation. It is, in a word, stunning.

Oozing wow and housed in the former Louis Vuitton boutique, The Ivy has the same sort of luxury that the designer label provided, though without prohibitive prices. Sophisticated but relaxed, classy but informal, it's a real Bobby Dazzler that offers customers the sort of food that people like to eat – rather than pretentious dishes designed to impress.

COMFORT

And so, for instance, the menu features such brilliant comfort food as The Ivy shepherd's pie – it's on my list for my next visit.

Prices are reasonable. Diners expecting to shell out the price of a top-class meal in London, will be surprised to find they can fork out just £21 for a three-course set menu. Expect accessible, brasserie-style eating with great value – but with added glitz and glamour.

With such glamour on every level, it's important that the staff provide service that sizzles. And, happily, they do. The venue offers an all-encompassing menu, serving British classics from dawn until dusk, including breakfast, elevenses, weekend brunch, lunch, afternoon tea, light snacks, dinner and cocktails.

Catch it if you can – the rare sesame-coated tuna



My partner and I ate on the second floor, taking a quiet corner seat where we had a view across part of the city and the rest of the dining area. It was stunning. As, indeed, was the food. She started with a tempura prawn number. It was delightful.

My starter was equally accomplished and offered dizzying flavour. A warm crispy duck salad.

Our mains were equally accomplished. She ate a whole grilled lobster with garlic and parsley butter, watercress and thick cut chips. My main was another classic; a seared Yellowfin tuna salad.

Convivial dining – in beautiful surroundings



We skipped dessert. Though the classic selection featuring crème brûlée and apple tart fine all read well, we didn't want to be late. The Ivy did, however, do more than enough to persuade us to return. Classic dishes, plenty of choice, good skills from the kitchen, engaging service and decent prices were duly noted – though, in truth, it's the venue itself that has star quality.

The Ivy, in London, is one of Britain's great gastronomic institutions and looking to replicate the Covent Garden joint in Birmingham was no easy task.

The original has a near 100-year history and welcomed such guests as Sir Laurence Olivier and Sir John Gielgud, Benedict Cumberbatch, Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, Madonna, David and Victoria Beckham, Angelina Jolie, Dame Judi Dench, Sir Ian McKellen and James McAvoy.

The Birmingham one might not feature a cast quite so starry. Nonetheless, those behind the impressive launch can tick the box reading: Mission Accomplished. For The Ivy Birmingham is hands down the best new launch in the city in recent years.

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Black Country House, Rounds Green Road, Olbury B69 2DG

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1
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BRAND NEW limited edition, enhanced
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minutes to coast, ground rent
included for 2017, no age limit,
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holidays

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Self Catering Holiday
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wining & dining

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Kinver Comm Centre, Sun 3rd June
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Refreshments. 0121 550 4361

Markets

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Rugby Club
Open every Wednesday
from 16th May
07957 399964

3
Home & Services

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seat, detachable cushions, unused,
as new. Was £1,400 sell £250.
Must collect. 07930 904273.

In Your Garden

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We supply & fit. Free quotes.
Call: 01922 720270
We also supply sleepers and decking

Items For Sale

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That the Business
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Order of 1977 requires that
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differentiate between Private
and Trade.

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HAVE YOU CHECKED your adver-
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their responsibility to inform the
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accuracies on the first day of publica-
tion.

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Roundhouse/Graham/Farsh/
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Corgi, Dinky, Spot On.
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thetrainmaster67@hotmail.com

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FOR DIE CAST CARS /
LORRIES
Britains, Corgi, Dinky,
Spot on, Tri-ang, Danbury Mint
and Mamod Engines.
Best prices paid.
Any condition.
Collections bought.
Telephone 01922 327897
or 07976 691563.

READERS ARE ADVISED to
carefully consider all of their options
before agreeing to the sale of any
of their items.

Loans

READERS ARE REMINDED
that they may require profes-
sional advice before entering into
obligations.

specialists at
your service

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01543 439095 • 01922 716029

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AA Digital Aerials

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results call
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Brought to you by Express & Star

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All quotes beaten!
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Over 40 year exp | All work guaranteed
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01902 579 592

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SPECIAL OFFER
10 Bays of quality fencing, concrete posts,
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Heavy duty panels supplied & fitted.
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www.portwayfencing.co.uk

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"I am extremely happy with
the service I get from my
Express & Star Classified Sales
Representatives and would
recommend them to anyone! They
have done a very professional job
with my website so I get online
enquiries as well now."

Michael-
Portway Fencing

For great business
results call
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Brought to you by Express & Star

Gardening Services

GARDENS TIDIED from £5 per
garden. 25 years experience. Call
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Gas Fitting

READERS ARE ADVISED
To check that anyone
carrying out any Gas work
is Gas Safe Registered.

It is an offence under the Gas
Safety (Installation and Use)
Regulations 1998 to carry out
gas work in the UK without
being on the Gas Safe Register.

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Bricklaying and all paving work
Fencing and gates
Conservatory and porch bases
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Call John 01384 326405 or
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Clean and Reliable. All Work
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Removals

CALL DEAN NOW: For all your
Removal needs, 07429 453209/
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12 years experience.
SINGLE ITEMS TO FULL LOADS.
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Flat Roofing, Tiling, Roof Repairs,
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www.mgroofingwestmidlands.co.uk

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(T&Cs Apply)

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t.v. / home
entertainment

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results call
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4
Pets & Animals

Equestrian Corner

ALL READERS are advised to
check if Horses, Donkeys or Ponies
have the required Passport infor-
mation, this is a legal requirement.

Guns & Dogs

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS
Advertisers must ensure that
they meet all necessary legal
requirements for owning and using
guns.

UGBA GUN DOG TRAINING
CLASSES (Retrievers only) held at
Leighton, Shropshire, The Kinners-
ley Arms Inn, SY5 6RN. 8 x classes
£60. 7pm Thurs, May 31 then every
2wks. Beginners & people to shoot
over their dogs. Phil 07771 617196.

Pets Corner

BORDER COLLIE puppies, tri
colour and black and white, excel-
lent temperament. 07747 496737.

NOTICE TO READERS
Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer:

1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with its Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree. Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

5 Business & Farming

Business Opportunities

READERS are recommended to take appropriate professional advice before entering into any obligations.

6 Property

Accommodation To Let

NOTICE TO READERS
It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments/contracts.

A SMART SINGLE EN SUITE room in a Shared house, Netherton. £35 p.w. inc. bills. No DSS. 2 weeks deposit. 07940 116130.

DUDLEY 2-Bed new build apartment, nice area, dss ok, deposit negotiable. Call/text 07526 146603

SINGLE PERSON flat, furnished, CH, No DSS, £85pw. Sedgley. 01902 885985.

Overseas Property

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments.

If an ad is wrong, the ASA is here to put it right.

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- Repossessions stopped
- Houses bought in any condition
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- Probate Estates Welcome
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CASH PAID WITHIN DAYS!

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Fast Sale? Yes! Any Location? Yes!
No Fees? Yes! Any Condition? Yes!

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or text "Cash" to 66777
yeshomebuyers.com

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Sell today, sign today, complete when u wish

£££ RENT BACK OPTIONS £££

Houses / Land Required

We also buy Commercial Property

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Sandwell area: Call 0121 696 4154
Walsall & Cannock area: Call 01922 432049
Wolverhampton: Call 01902 489901
www.homecashbuyer.co.uk

7 Jobs

Employment Wanted

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT FCA
Seeks part-time accountancy / bookkeeping.
Based in Halesowen.
07860 357143.

Full Time General

Due to continued growth our client based in West Bromwich are looking to recruit for the following position

Accounts Clerk

(Initially to cover Maternity leave with a strong chance of a permanent position for the right candidate)

- Purchase ledger
- Sales Ledger / Credit Control
- Other Accounts Administration duties to support the overall tasks as required.
- Experience using Sage 50 system.

Flexible hours / days to suit.

For more information contact
Chloe on 01902 319891
or email your CV to
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Learn how to take blood ...

TRAIN AS A PHLEBOTOMIST

Introduction to Phlebotomy

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- No previous experience required

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Leather, Sat Nav, reversing camera, heated seats, FSH, Spider alloys, 98,000 miles, 18 months warranty.
Very good condition.
£8,250.
07935 515436.

BARGAIN

CHEVROLET MATIZ
Red,
genuine 8,167 miles,
2009, as new.
Health forces sale.
Tax £30 per year.
3 months MoT.
£2,500.
01902 846687.



FORD B-MAX
Limited Edition, 16 plate, 1388 engine, 10,000 miles, silver metallic, black roof, black alloys, petrol, blue tooth, radio / CD, aircon, front fog lights, electric window, sliding back doors, immaculate condition.
£8,000
07788 684373.



VOLKSWAGEN T5.1
2011, 96,720 miles, silver, abs, electric windows, air bag, electric mirrors, alarm, long MoT, metallic paint, diesel, alloys, stereo, front seat swivel to rear.
£10,000 ono.
07543 878695.



VW GOLF S SDI 2.0L 2006.
117k miles, black pearlescent, FSH, climate control, Scirocco alloys, new tyres, new cam belt, e/w front, MoT November 2018.
£2,250 ono
07768 234576.

EXCELLENT CONDITION

VW PASSAT 2.0 TDI SPORT 2008
Excellent condition, history, MoT, cruise control, air con.
£2,850 ono.
07976 359922.

VW PASSAT HIGHLINE
Silver, 2010, electric windows/ mirrors, air con, fsh, alarm, central locking, cruise control, diesel, stereo/CD, Leather heated seats, 131k miles.
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07801 728518.

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ABC AUTO SALVAGE WANTED URGENT
Scrap & MOT Failures Best Prices Paid ELV Registered Spares Always Available
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Oldbury Area.

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- FREE COLLECTION
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www.mainlinesalvage.co.uk

OUR ADVERTISERS are reminded that it is an offence under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 to buy scrap cars/metal for cash.

Cars Under £1500

BARGAIN

ROVER 620 Si
Green, 77,673 miles,
3 owners.
MoT, part service history.
Excellent condition.
£320 ono.
07939 101769.

SUBARU FORESTER

2000, petrol,
137,250 miles had engine rebuild at 127,000, 784 miles, new clutch, cambelt, recent front discs and pads and Cat convertor,
MOT May 2019.
£1,200
07795 001603.

BARGAIN

VAUXHALL MERIVA CLUB 1.6
08 plate, MoT April, silver, 86,000 miles, very clean, runs and drives spot on, plus service history, PAS, CD.
£1,495 ono.
07415 013799.

LOOK

VW GOLF TDI
2001, new turbo, 12 months MoT, good condition for year.
£950 o.n.o.
07542 146679.

Motorbikes



FOR SALE
YAMAHA VIRAGO 250CC
Circa 2000, as new, only 3,125 miles, MoT till Oct 2018.
£1,295 ono.
07870 860705.

Vehicles Wanted

CROWN MOTORS

Guaranteed best price for your unwanted cars and vans

07903 549849
buyer will call

alan reed cars
Used cars wanted for cash Top prices paid. HP settled. Buyer could call.
01562 711083 / 07831 245313

9 Local Information

Public Notices

PUBLIC & LEGAL NOTICES

For convenience you may fax any advertising requirements to Marie Hogg on **01902 319694** or email marie.hogg@expressandstar.co.uk (remember to include a name/ contact number for confirmation of receipt)

ALAN TAYLOR (Deceased)

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of 4 Maple Road Halesowen West Midlands, who died on 16/12/2017, are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned Solicitors on or before 10/08/2018, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have had notice.
M J DARBY & COMPANY
107 Kent Road Halesowen B62 8PB T531321

10 Personals

Personal

GENTLEMAN
59 years, n/s, fit,
active, WLTM classy lady
for friendship and fun.
Box Number C21197,
Express and Star,
Queen Street,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.



MALE 69
Divorced, 5ft 10, slimish.
Likes sports, DIY, countryside.
WLTM, slim lady who is loving and caring.
For long term relationship.
Genuine replies only.
Box Number P21200,
Express and Star,
Queen Street,
Wolverhampton,
WV1 1ES.

BROADCAST YOUR BUSINESS

WITH THE COMPLETE PRODUCTION OF A COMPELLING VIDEO



1. PRE-PRODUCTION PLANNING
Where we find out about you!
2. ON-LOCATION RECORDING
The important bit.
3. AUDIO PRODUCTION
Music or voice over?
4. POST PRODUCTION
Where the finishing touches happen.
5. VIDEO ADVERTISING
Want even more exposure?

CALL 01902 319730

Astra gets Euro 6D-Temp powertrains

By James Parker

Vauxhall continues its move to Euro 6d-TEMP with two new engines joining its award-winning Astra range, a powerful 1.6-litre Turbo (200PS) petrol and a 1.6-litre CDTi (136PS) diesel unit. The strict Euro 6d-TEMP emissions standard, which includes real driving emissions measured on public roads, comes into force for new registrations in September 2019.

Producing 200PS and 300Nm, the 1.6-litre petrol engine with six-speed manual or automatic transmissions can power the Astra to a maximum speed of 146mph and achieve 0-60mph in just 7.3 seconds. Fuel economy is 43.5mpg (combined) and CO2 emissions are 151g/km. In order to reduce particulate emissions as much as possible, the 1.6-litre direct injection petrol engine features a close-coupled Gasoline Particulate Filter (GPF) for optimum regeneration (i.e. oxidation of the particles that accumulate in the filter).

With 320Nm of torque, the first Euro 6d-TEMP diesel engine to be introduced to the Astra range is the 1.6-litre CDTi (136PS), available with either manual or automatic transmission. It achieves combined fuel economy from 64.2mpg and CO2 emissions from 116g/km.

The engine is equipped with Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) technology for further reduction of nitrogen oxide emissions. In the SCR process, AdBlue is injected into the exhaust gas. The solution



Prices start from £20,595 on-the-road



Order banks are open for the 1.6 Turbo (200PS) petrol

decomposes into ammonia, which is then stored on a catalyst substrate. Nitrogen oxide enters the catalyst in the exhaust gas, and is then selectively reduced to nitrogen and water.

Order banks are open now for 1.6-litre Turbo (200PS) petrol in both Hatch and Sports Tourer body styles. The 1.6-litre CDTi (136PS) is available to order now in Hatch with the Sports Tourer body style available soon after. Prices start from £20,595 on-the-road.

The rapid transition to Euro 6d-TEMP compliance is part of Vauxhall's strategy to become a leader in vehicle emissions reduction. The next steps toward this goal are the introduction of four electrified models by 2020, including the next generation Corsa, which will also be available as a fully electric vehicle, and the Grandland X as the first

plug-in hybrid from Vauxhall. By 2024 Vauxhall will become fully electrified, offering a hybrid or a battery electric version of every passenger car model.

The Astra, voted European Car of the Year in 2016, is one of the bestselling models in the Vauxhall portfolio.

Light, frugal and agile, the Astra Hatch and Sports Tourer are built at Vauxhall's manufacturing plant in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire. Despite compact exterior dimensions, occupants in the Astra enjoy particularly generous legroom – especially in the rear.

The Sports Tourer can also carry up to 1,630 litres of luggage and the extensive load area is easy to access thanks to the optional power tailgate, which can be opened and shut with a simple kicking motion under the bumper.

In addition to featuring a host of

driver assistance systems such as Forward Collision Alert with Automatic Emergency Braking and Lane Departure Warning with Lane Keep Assist, the Astra is the first car in its class to be made available with full LED matrix headlights. IntelliLux LED Matrix Lighting on the Astra consists of 16 LED segments – eight on each side of the vehicle – that automatically and constantly adapt the length and distribution of the light beam to every situation, without glare for oncoming traffic.

Equipment for the Astra also includes infotainment systems that can be operated by touch-screen, remote controls on the steering wheel and voice recognition. They additionally allow operation of suitably-equipped smartphones via the phone's voice-control system, such as Siri or Google, and they are compatible with both Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

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Ford's new state-of-the-art Environmental Test Centre puts all the world's weather under one roof, enabling engineers to test forthcoming vehicles – from a small Ford KA+ to a two-tonne Ford Transit in the most demanding conditions.

Altitudes higher than Mont Blanc, the tallest Alpine peak, vehicle and wind speeds of up to 250 km/h (155 mph), snow, glaring sunlight and rain are among conditions that are a push of a button away in Europe's most advanced automotive environmental test centre.

On an area the size of a football pitch, engineers can now take vehicles on demanding journeys around the world, from the desert heat of the Sahara, to the arctic cold of Siberia and the heavy humidity of Costa Rica.

"The vast range of punishing simulation tests will enable Ford drivers to be confident their vehicles can handle whatever climate zone they live in," said Joe Bakaj, vice president, product development, Ford of Europe. "Travelling to the four corners of this building is like taking a trip to the four corners of the world, and our engineers will do that around the clock, every day, to continue to develop future best-in-class vehicles."



Engineers can work on up to ten vehicles at a time

The subject of a €70 million investment, the test centre offers the first automotive wind tunnel that can simulate 5,200 metres, the same elevation as the Mount Everest North Base Camp, and the first with such a range of conditions that can be simulated under one roof. The facility can also cool two rooms to -40 C and heat them up to 55 C, as well as generate 95 per cent humidity. The temperature extremes make the facility at the centre in Cologne, Germany, the hottest, coldest and most humid place in Europe, and home to the highest point in Western Europe.

In the UK, Ford Dunton's Environmental Test Laboratory has been capable of simulating altitudes up to 3,660m since 1999 – as well as temperatures from -40 to +55 deg Centigrade. Now fully operational, engineers can work on up to ten different vehicles simultaneously. Testing covers comfort, safety and durability, as well as electrical performance, braking, air conditioning, trailer towing, cabin heating and traffic jam situations. Engineers analyse the effects of high-speed winds on exterior parts, check the robustness against rain and snow, and see how fast a windscreen defrosts at different temperatures.

"The Environmental Test Centre represents a significant investment for Ford of Europe that will help enable the company here to develop vehicles for global markets," said Bakaj. All Ford vehicles will be tested, which features three climate wind tunnels, including a high-altitude lab, and four temperature-controlled test chambers, one of which will also facilitate humidity testing:

Wind Tunnel 1 is set up for hot and cold immersion testing. The 28 spotlights with 4,000-watt bulbs help to simulate the powerful sunbeams that enable engineers to check how fast the cabin can be cooled. This wind tunnel can also evaluate the interior noise from vehicle systems at different speeds, temperatures and humidity levels, to check the heating and air conditioning noise

Wind Tunnel 2 is also set up for hot and cold immersion testing. Engineers can use this wind tunnel to make snow and rain to check the effect on visibility, engine starts and how long it takes to heat the cabin

Wind Tunnel 3 is the altitude lab, where engineers can test vehicles at wind speeds of up to 120 km/h (75 mph) at up to 5,200 metres. The high altitude cold start and durability tests ensure the vehicle's liquids don't burst their lines when working under higher pressure.

"We can see how windshield wipers function in Arctic temperatures, how engine performance changes in extreme heat and cold, and even how much snow falls on the driver's head when they open the door. It's an engineer's dream," said Michael Steup, project manager, Environmental Test Centre, Ford of Europe.

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Annie Hicklin breaks through to fire at goal for the Cannock Olympia team



Olympia Cannock thwart a Stroud attack on their way to becoming national champions



MVP Olivia Gonsalves scores for Olympia Cannock



Athalia Imbanga bursts through for Cannock

Girl power! Team gets hands on national title

SPORTING FEATURE

By Joseph Masi

"It is really difficult to win the national two years ago so this really is a fantastic achievement."

A TALENTED handball team is celebrating after being crowned national champions for the second successive year.

Cannock Olympia reclaimed their under-19s national handball title after beating Stroud at the Derby Arena.

The victory is the latest in a long line of success for the team which is coached by Maria Moore.

Over the past few years, the Olympia under-19s team have reached 10 national finals, winning eight of them.

Olivia Gonsalves, Athalia Imbanga, Ellie Smith, Annie Hicklin and Mia Williams all played starring roles in their latest triumph – with Imbanga netting in the final 20 seconds to secure the 24-23 win over Stroud.

And club chairman Nenad 'Pop' Popovic believes the girls' success will never be repeated.

Special

"It is really difficult to win the national two years ago so this really is a fantastic achievement," he said. "The success of this team will never be repeated."

"It is special because all the girls attend Cardinal Griffin Catholic College except for one who is from Sutton Coldfield."

"They have now played in 10 national finals, winning eight of them and have only ever lost one game in their age category."

"The girls are a credit to Cannock and the area." Following the performance at the Derby Arena,



The Olympia team celebrate their success, which follows last year's win

Gonsalves was crowned Most Value Player for the second successive year. And while she is too old to play for the team next year, Popovic isn't ruling out a hat-trick of national titles.

"All but three of the girls are eligible to play for the under-19s next year," he added.

"Some of them are going off to play in the senior for Manchester Hawks."

"It could be a hat-trick of victories but it is going to be very difficult."

"Gonsalves was crowned MVP but she can't play next year because she is too old by three days which she isn't happy about."

"But this is a fantastic team full of talented players so they will give it everything."

Meanwhile, Popovic thanked team sponsor Cameron Homes for the role they have played in the team's success.

"We have all benefited from the support of Cameron Homes who are drivers behind girls' handball in the area," he added.

"Because of all the support they have given us we have been able to grow and attract girls from further afield. We have now got a host of talented youngsters coming through the ranks and they'll ensure the club is successful for many years."

RAF runners fly to a record relay run

RUNNERS have smashed a relay world record by more than four hours at RAF Cosford. The challenge saw 100 members of the RAF clock up consecutive 10 kilometre runs on the athletics track at the air force base in 64 hours, 36 minutes and 22 seconds.

The previous record was set in Palos Heights in Illinois, in June, 2015 at 69 hours, six minutes and 52 seconds.

Servicemen and women are now waiting with bated breath for the Guinness World Record adjudicators to verify their attempt. Runners from air force bases across the UK descended on Shropshire for the attempt.

The final 10k leg was run by senior aircraftsman Michael Kallenberg, the venture's chief organiser. He said: "It has been a long three or four days, but we're all delighted that we've broken the record. I was quite lucky doing the final leg, I got to enjoy it and lap it up as it were."

"I just thought, with it being the 100th anniversary of the RAF, it would be nice to set a new world record in celebration."

Howzat! New cricket pitches now on way

THREE all-weather cricket practice pitches and a basketball court are to be created as part of a £150,000 new sports centre.

Wolverhampton Council is working with the England and Wales Cricket Board on the scheme for Peace Green, which is off the Dunstall Road, Dunstall Hill. Work is due to start over the next few weeks. It is hoped that the facilities will be ready in September.

Health

Artificial cricket wickets are also set for East Park, Claregate Playing Fields, Fowlers Park, Newbridge Playing Fields, King George V Playing Fields in Wednesfield, Goodyear park off the Stafford Road and Ward Street in Bilston.

Councillor Hazel Malcolm, cabinet member for public health, said: "These facilities will have a major role to play in improving health and well-being."

Back in best shape for this fight – Davis

BIRMINGHAM super bantamweight, Sean 'Showtime' Davis, is looking forward to his ring return. Davis, is set to fight on BCB Promotions Emerging Stars card on Saturday, June 9.

The Brummie boxer has been in a number of high profile bouts, including fights for the WBC International Super Bantamweight Title and BBBofC British Super Bantamweight Title, and is looking forward to stepping back in the squared circle.

"I am feeling great and I am back in the best shape possible," he told www.bcb-promotions.com. "It has been a long time since my last fight and I am really happy to get back in the ring. The work rate for me has always been very high but I seemed to have found a new level of fitness."

Davis made the difficult decision to move trainers from Peter Christie to Shaun Cogan earlier this year. It was a tough call to make for the likeable 26 year-old, having been with Christie since childhood. However, he is enjoying life under his new mentor.

Sport

Girls keep their hands in
to reach the very top
See page 31



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Top knock performance as Hales beat neighbours

A SUPERB innings of 145 in 165 balls from Ed Kilbee – including 17 fours and four sixes – eased Halesowen to an imposing 265-9 victory over neighbours Bromsgrove, who were dismissed for 187.

Ash Newfield took three for 66 for the visitors but – apart from Alec Baker (86) and Lewis Cordes (51) – the Bromsgrove batters showed little application against Dylan Ross-Watt (3-27), Eddie Rhodes (3-39) and Charlie Hartley (3-51).

Hales are now sixth in the division one table 25 points behind table-toppers Shifnal with skipper Alexei Kervezee quietly pleased with the improvements. Bromsgrove have dropped into the bottom three.

Former Dutch international Kervezee said: "We showed a lot of application at key times in the game. It was an outstanding and measured knock by Kilbee which allowed us to take the game out of Bromsgrove's reach. Credit to them they fought back well and made us rethink but in the end we were able to finish them off with some clinical bowling."

Kervezee, who as well as captaining Halesowen has also signed for minor counties side Shropshire, added: "We now need to build on this for next week at Leamington, who are right behind us in the table. We need to string some back-to-back performances together – that's the plan."

Meanwhile, the second team were bundled out for 78 having been 33-8 at one stage chasing Bromsgrove 2nd XI 141-9 on a tricky surface at St Godwald's Road. Only Charlie Greening's 41 not out was of merit in a poor display.

Old Hill

Greening with 5-51 and Archie Reeves with 3-37 were the main wicket takers as Hales dropped to fifth place.

The thirds' match was abandoned and the fourths lost by five wickets at West Malvern.

Meanwhile, back in the Birmingham League Division One, Himley's losing draw at Bridgnorth put them 13 points behind Shifnal and Tamworth.

Stourbridge are four points behind following a five-wicket win at neighbours and old rivals Old Hill. Stourbridge dismissed the home side for 115 with Ravi Nagra hitting 32 for Old Hill, Dan Such taking 6-20 in 13.4 overs. Jitesh Jivan-Patel picked up 3-35 for Stourbridge. Marvarick Perry scored a breezy unbeaten 37 for Stourbridge who raced to victory after a slow start.

Himley skipper Greg Wright hit 42 in his side's innings of 146-9 at Bridgnorth but the home side's response was cut short by 20 overs due to rain. Bridgnorth seamer Adam Quiney took 3-32 but his side finished on 117-9. Despite three wickets apiece for Stuart Wedge, Chris Boroughs and Jamie Turner, a faster run-rate gave Bridgnorth the winning draw.

Lions coach hits out over Osama decision

LIONS Boxing Club coach Kevin Dillon is hoping talented teenager Osama Mohamed gets another shot at representing England after a controversial end to his European Schoolboy title hopes.

The 14-year-old from Halesowen saw his championship bid ended at the quarter-final stage by Russian Aleksei Zheleznov.

But having watched a stream of the fight from Bulgaria, Dillon believes the youngster was 'robbed' of a place in the last four.

"It was a terrible decision," said Dillon. "Micky

Driscoll, one of the England coaches, said Osama won every round.

"He couldn't believe the decision, even the crowd booed when it was announced.

"He was robbed. Osama had been on the front foot and pretty much dominated all three rounds. "There are no grounds for appeal and I think that is something that needs to be looked at.

"I'm really gutted for Osama because he had done so well and worked really hard to get this opportunity.

"But it has been a great experience for him, going abroad and listening to other coaches.

"He will have learned a lot from it and everyone at the club are very proud of him.

"He has made a good impression with the England coaches and hopefully this won't be the last time he is involved with them.

Mohamed will be looking to further enhance his reputation when he forms part of a four-strong team from Lions that will take part in the Monkstown Cup in Ireland next month.

CRADLEY BOOST TROPHY HOPES

CRADLEY revived their National Trophy hopes by securing maximum points from their 57-32 win at Buxton.

Sunday's victory moved the Motor Market Heathens back level with group leaders Coventry as they bounced back from the previous Monday's defeat by the Bees.

Despite only being with four of their own riders, the Heathens took advantage of an under-strength Hitmen side whose problems grew as the meeting progressed. Already without broken ankle victim Connor Coles, heat-leader David Wallinger then pulled out of the fixture in the build-up while reserve Lewis Whitmore was withdrawn after heat eight with an arm injury.

Heathens got their noses in front as early as heat two when Jason Edwards and local lad James Chattin combined for a 4-2 in the re-run after Whitmore had been disqualified for the hosts after sliding off in the initial staging. Kyle Bickley gated in the third and new signing Chris Widman got by Sam Woolley for a second successive 4-2. Alfie Bowtell and Edwards got the better of inexperienced Kieran Douglas and established an early eight-point lead.

The Derbyshire outfit hit back with a maximum in the next race as Ben Wilson made it two race wins out of two while Heathens guest Joe Lawlor couldn't find a way past skipper Tom Woolley.

Heathens stamped their authority on the fixture as Bickley and Widman bagged a 5-1 in the seventh before Bowtell and Edwards won a 5-0 after lapping Sam Woolley who had remounted after falling. That opened up a 13-point lead for the Heathens who took the next four race wins.

Heat 12 saw Bickley maintain his unbeaten start as and the Heathens rounded off in style with one final 5-1 as Bickley tucked in for a paid maximum behind Bowtell.

Manager Will Pottinger said: "It was important to get back to winning ways and sets us up nicely for the return at Monmore."

Karate ace takes on world's best



Dudley Shukokai with guest Clive Allen at new premises on Delph Industrial Estate in Brierley Hill

KARATE ace Mandie Read is hoping to celebrate a new home with success on the international stage.

Read runs Dudley Shukokai, who have just acquired their own premises after spending 18 years based at The Thorns in Brierley Hill.

Sixth-dan black belt Read is also the founder of All Styles Karate Alliance Great Britain, who will be competing in the WUKF World Karate Championships in Scotland next month.

The 53-year-old will be hoping to guide them to victory in Dundee between June 14 and 17, and build on their performance in Romania last

year, where they came 23rd out of 50 teams.

Read, who will take to the mat herself as she bids to add to her world bronze medal, has competed and been a teacher in the sport for 32 years and is targeting a top 15 finish.

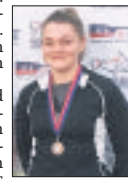
She said: "Our members have worked so hard since they came back from Romania. It has been non-stop, sometimes seven days a week. Especially for some of my younger squad members I have got high hopes. We are targeting a top 15 finish this time round."

Basketball star Clive Allen opened the new premises on Delph Industrial Estate.

Amy wins bronze for indoor row

MEMBERS of Dudley Rowing club entered the Be-Row indoor rowing championships in Solihull recently and came away with a bronze medal.

Eighteen-year-old Amy Turner (pictured), accompanied by her father Phil who also entered, came third in her category to win bronze. Her father came seventh in his category. Fifteen-year-old Ben Nolan came fourth in his category.



Amy Turner

This event is held every year and organised by Birmingham University in conjunction with Birmingham Rowing Club. It is open to any club and gym in the Midlands who use rowing machines, and attracts over a hundred participants.

Dudley Rowing Club was formed three years ago. Based at the watersports centre in Netherton, the club meets every Tuesday morning and evening, and Sunday afternoon. The club is open to any age group, including retired people. There is a qualified coach present at these sessions.

Three youngsters from the club will be competing in the Bridgnorth Regatta on Saturday, June 9. This will be the first time that Dudley Rowing club have entered an organised regatta, and for these youngsters the first time they have faced competition.

Capital experience for the DK runners

ATHLETES from Dudley Kingswinford Running Club ventured to the capital at the weekend for some quality racing rubbing shoulders with the cream of the British road running scene.

Dave Norman on Sunday took part in the Westminster Mile, where he took part in the British Masters Mile Championships finishing in 5.29 to place 16th in his age group. On Monday a team of six competed in the London Vitality 10000, a race won by Mo Farah in a lightning time of 29.44. Ben Foster of Dudley & Stourbridge Harriers was the first local lad home in 34.28 in 212th place, Dave Norman was first hoop home in 39.28, finishing in 726th place.

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